

**WORLD COUNCIL
OF CHURCHES**

Central Committee

Minutes of the Fifty-Third Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland

26 August - 2 September 2003





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World Council of Churches

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1. OPENING ACTIONS

1.1 Worship

The Opening Worship Service took place in the Chapel of the Ecumenical Centre. The preacher was the Revd Jong-Wha Park, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, who preached on Galatians 6: 1-10.

1.2 In Memoriam

During the Opening Worship there was an act of commemoration of a number of persons close to the life of the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement who had died since the last meeting of the Central Committee. Their names were read and a prayer of thanksgiving offered.

Rev Steven Weagba Muin, Jr, a former general secretary of the Liberian Council of Churches, died on 14 August in Monrovia at the age of 55. Muin also served the ecumenical movement as Africa regional secretary for the World Student Christian Federation.

Revd Jean Bokeleale, honorary president of the Church of Christ in Congo, died on 30 September in Kinshasa. He was the first president of his church and a member of the WCC Central Committee. He was responsible for setting up a number of significant institutions including the Protestant University of Congo in Kinshasa, the imposing Centenary Cathedral, the secretariat of the Ecumenical Council of Christian Churches of Congo and many hospitals and schools throughout the country..

Father Prof. Dr Aurel Jivi, ordained priest of the Orthodox Church of Romania, died on 1 November at the age of 59. He had been on the academic staff of the University of Sibiu since 1979. Aurel Jivi published a number of articles on church history and ecumenism. He was a member of the WCC Central Committee and took part in WCC assemblies at Nairobi, Vancouver, Canberra and Harare. He also took part in a number of CEC assemblies and was a member of the Orthodox Commission for dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Prof. Dr Ivan Illich, theologian, educator and friend of the ecumenical movement, died on 2 December at the age of 76. Best known as co-founder of the Centre for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, Illich was the author of such influential books as *Deschooling Society*, *Energy and Equity*, and *Medical Nemesis: The Limits to Medicine*. Illich, forced to leave the Catholic priesthood in 1969, was a prominent speaker at the final assembly of the World Council on Christian Education at Lima in 1971, where the WCCE voted to merge with the WCC.

Revd Dr Richard Shaull, early interpreter of Latin American liberation theology and a speaker on “the church and revolution” at the 1966 Geneva conference on “Church and Society”, died on 25 October at the age of 82. Shaull’s teaching career was spent at the Presbyterian Seminary in Campinas, Brazil and at Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA. Among his publications were the books *Containment and Change* (with Carl Oglesby), *The Reformation and Liberation Theology* and *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* (with Waldo A. Cesar).

Revd Michael De Vries, a former WCC Communication staff member, died 11 November in the Netherlands at the age of 79. He

was executive secretary for radio and television communication. His work culminated in the establishment of Intervox, which produced taped interviews for radio stations around the world. He had a particularly important communication role, including the production of radio cassettes on issues facing the two WCC assemblies in Uppsala (1968) and Nairobi (1975).

Revd Dr Dieter Trautwein, a liturgist and theologian who from his early years was a popular seminar leader at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, died on 9 November at the age of 75. An editor of the ecumenical hymnbook *Cantate Domino*, he was the author and translator of numerous hymns. He participated in the Accra meeting of Faith and Order in 1974 and was one of the worship planners for the Vancouver assembly in 1983. Trautwein also became well-known throughout the ecumenical movement for his support of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and for honouring the memory of victims of the Shoah .

His Beatitude Abouna Philipos I, the first Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, died on 18 September at the age of 96. Abbot of the Debra Bijanou monastery before his consecration to the episcopate of the Ethiopian church, Philipos worked closely with His Holiness Pope Shenouda to achieve autocephalous standing for the Eritrean church, of which he became the founding patriarch in 1998.

Mr Per Voksø, a participant in the first assembly of the World Council of Churches and member of the WCC central and executive committees from 1983 to 1991, died on 28 December at the age of 79. He was active for many years in the Church of Norway, Norwegian Church Aid, the Lutheran World Federation and the YMCA-YWCA. He helped to set up his church's council on

ecumenical and international relations and became the founding president of the national council of the Church of Norway. Before entering the full-time service of the church, he had been a professional journalist and editor for the Norwegian edition of the *Reader's Digest*.

Revd Dr Lothar Coenen, a German theologian of the reformed tradition and former member of the WCC Central Committee, died on 25 April at the age of 78. Karl Barth was one of his teachers during his theological studies. Afterwards he was a parish minister in the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland. In 1978 he was appointed director for ecumenical affairs within the overseas department of the EKD. He took part in drawing up the convergence text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Lima 1982) and was active in the ecumenical assemblies in Basle and Seoul on the conciliar process.

Prof. Dr Dorothee Sölle, German theologian and poet, died on 27 April at the age of 73. In her plenary speech to the World Council of Churches sixth assembly in Vancouver in 1983, she charged the "first world" with living a "life without a soul that calculates everything in terms of what it is worth", and urged it to turn to the prophets of the Old Testament for their vision of a just world order. That message was central to Sölle's theological contribution. Young people and women in particular responded to her challenge to the idolatry of material possessions, to "security" as a state ideology, and of political priority being given to armaments. Others disagreed. Undeterred, Sölle retained a lifelong passion for, and commitment to, justice.

Sir Alan Walker, the first World Director of Evangelism of the World Methodist Council, died in Sydney, Australia on 29 January

at the age of 91. The World Methodist Evangelism Institute was founded under his leadership in 1982. In 1986, he received the World Methodist Peace Award. Following his retirement, he returned to his native Sydney as principal of the Pacific School of Evangelism; this institution has since been renamed the Alan Walker College of Evangelism in Sydney.

Father Dr Bruno Chenu, a member of the religious order of the Assumptionists, died on 23 May in Paris at the age of 60. Journalist, theologian, teacher and writer, Chenu was the Roman Catholic Co-President of the ecumenical "Groupe des Dombes" from 1998 to his death, and Editor-in-chief of the French Roman Catholic daily newspaper "La Croix" from 1988-1997. His doctoral thesis was on the ecclesiological significance of the WCC. Chenu was a recognised authority on missiology, the third-world and black theology. His most recent book on African-American spirituals was published in both French and English to wide acclaim.

Bishop Amon Mwakisunga, a retired bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, died on 5 June in Songea at the age of 70. He served his church in different ministries as teacher, lecturer and principal of Makumira theological college before his election to become bishop in 1989. He also served as Africa secretary of the Lutheran World Federation from 1972-1985.

H.E. Tauese Pita Fiti Sunia, died on 26 March in Honolulu, Hawaii at the age of 63. From 1971 he served as a deacon in the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa. In 1996 he was elected as chairman of the Church with responsibility for church affairs in American Samoa, Hawaii, New Zealand and the United States. In the same year he was elected Governor of American Samoa and served two full terms of office consecutively.

Bishop La Verne Mercado, former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, died on 23 July. He was a staunch supporter of the ecumenical movement in the Philippines and also well-known for his strong opposition to the declaration of martial law by President Ferdinand E. Marcos and support of the development of a relevant Christian witness in the context of the economic, social and political life of the Philippines. After serving in various ministries and offices in the United Methodist Church in the Philippines, he was elected Bishop of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines. Committed to ecumenical work, he was elected General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. He retired in 1988.

H.E. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, H.E. Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh, died on 4 August at the age of 89. He was educated in Paris, where he studied medicine and took secret monastic vows in 1939. During the Second World War he served as a military surgeon until 1948, when he was ordained to the priesthood and went to England to be the Orthodox chaplain of the ecumenical Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. Ordained as bishop in 1957, from 1963 to 1974 he was Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Western Europe, and in 1966 was made Metropolitan of the Diocese of Sourozh (which covers Great Britain and Ireland). He was a member of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church to the 1961 WCC assembly in New Delhi at which the church was received into membership of the WCC. He was a member of the WCC Central Committee from 1968-1975 and actively involved in the Christian Medical Commission. He served the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain and Ireland for more than fifty years, earning the respect and affection of many thousands of people throughout the world for his deep spirituality, humanity and tireless witness to the Gospel of Christ.

Dr Tapio Saraneva, Director of FinnChurchAid, died on 18 August 2003 in Helsinki, after a severe illness, at the age of 60. He served his church in different parishes before becoming secretary to the archbishops Mikko Juva and John Vikström. He was known as the Finnish defender of liberation theology. He was entrusted with several important tasks, both in his homeland and abroad. He was Vice President of LWF's World Service since 2000. He was also a member of the Finnish government delegation for relations with developing countries and a member of the board of the civil society organization for human rights. He was a member of the Finnish church council for nearly ten years.

1.3 Call to Order and Welcome

The Moderator, His Holiness Aram I, called to order the fifty-third meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at 09.35hrs on Tuesday 26 August 2003.

In welcoming the Central Committee members, he stated that they were meeting at a critical point in the modern history of the ecumenical movement. The WCC was by its nature a fellowship of churches. The Gospel reminded us that 'where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Our treasure was in our spiritual fellowship, and our actions as a fellowship must be sustained by spirituality.

He wished all participants a good and fruitful stay in Geneva.

1.4 Roll Call and Seating of Substitutes

At the invitation of the Moderator, the General Secretary called the roll of the Officers, Presidents and members of the Central Committee. Apologies for absence had been received from several

members. He also welcomed advisers, observers and guests, giving a particular welcome to Msgr John Mutiso-Mbinda and Msgr John A. Radano, of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, delegated observers of the Roman Catholic Church; Bishop Mvume Dandala, newly inducted General Secretary of the All Africa Council of Churches; and Revd Dr Emilio Castro, former General Secretary.

He also welcomed the stewards, 32 young people from 25 countries.

The following substitutes were agreed and seated as voting members for the whole meeting, except as indicated:

Mr Dan Apostu for H.E. Krystof, Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia

Revd Julius Patrick Coltman for Revd Stephan Titus, United Congregation Church of Southern Africa

Mr John Doom for Revd Dr Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, Methodist Church Fiji

Revd Fr Andrei Eliseev for Mr Georgy Rochin, Russian Orthodox Church

Very Revd Benedictos Ioannou for Ms Despina Prassas, Ecumenical Patriarchate

H.G. Abune Nathnael for H.G. Archbishop Abune Kerlos, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Ms Ingrid Vad Nilsen for Revd Canon Dr Trond Bakkevig, Church of Norway (27-29 August)

Mr Jorgo Papadhopuli for H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, Kisha Orthodhokse Autoqefale e Shqipërisë, 1-2 September)

Bishop Melvin G. Talbert for Revd Dr Bruce Robbins, United Methodist Church

Revd Seige Sellasie Yohannes for Fr Melake Tabor Teshome Zerihun, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

The following substitutes were further agreed at later sessions:

For 28-29 August:

Mr Jorgo Papadhopuli, for HE Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki

For 29 August - 2 September:

Dr Jae-Woong Ahn, for Revd Jong-Wha Park

For 1-2 September:

Revd Livius Ioan Jebelean, for Bishop Hans Gerny

Oberkirchenrätin Dr Dagmar Heller, for Bishop Martin Hein

Ms Chen Meilin for Revd Ying Gao

HE Archbishop Aristarchos Peristeris, for Dr Audeh Quawas

1.5 Approval of Membership of Central Committee, Executive Committee and the Faith and Order Standing and Plenary Commissions

The General Secretary presented the following for approval by the Central Committee:

1.5.1 Central Committee

The Executive Committee had received several resignations from the Central Committee and recommended the following replacements:

- Revd Iteffa Gobena of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus to replace Revd Yadessa Daba.

- Revd Cibebe Kuss of the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil to replace Diakonin Valmi Ione Becker.
- Rt. Revd C. Christopher Epting of the Episcopal Church USA to replace Dr Pamela Chinnis.
- Rt. Revd Tom Butler, Bishop of Southwark, of the Church of England to replace Rt. Revd Barry Rogerson.
- Most Revd Dr Rufus Ositelu of the Church of the Lord Aladura to replace Ms Abigail Ogunsanya.
- Revd Dr Nicolae Mōșoiu of the Romanian Orthodox Church to replace Revd Prof. Aurel Jivi.
- Bishop Dr Martin Hein of the Evangelical Church in Germany to replace Landesbischofin Dr Margot Käßmann.
- Dr Priscilla Joseph of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan to replace Ms Jenny Siama Paul.
- Bishop Cephas Z. Mukandi of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe to replace Revd Farai Chirisa.

The Central Committee **approved** these replacements.

1.5.2. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee recommended the following replacements:

- Ms Idah Njobvu, Reformed Church in Zambia, to replace Ms Abigail Ogunsanya
- Revd Itessa Gobena, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, to replace Revd Yadessa Daba.

The Central Committee **approved** these replacements.

1.5.3 Faith and Order Standing and Plenary Commissions

The Faith and Order Standing Commission had proposed the following for election by the Central Committee:

- Bishop Hilarion of Vienna to take the place of Archbishop Feofan (Russian Orthodox Church) on the Standing Commission, and Mr Sergei Hovorun to take the place of Bishop Hilarion on the Plenary Commission.
- Dr Dimitra Koukoura (Ecumenical Patriarchate) to replace Ms Katarina Karkala-Zorbas on the Plenary Commission.
- Revd Dr Stefan Cosoroabe (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania) to take the place of Mrs Dorothea Binder on the Plenary Commission.

The General Secretary stated that he regretted that it was not always possible for a woman to be replaced by a woman, but reasons could be given.

The Central Committee **approved** the names proposed.

1.5.4 Finance Committee

The Executive Committee recommended that Bishop Dr Rolf Koppe be appointed a member of the Finance Committee.

The Central Committee **approved** his appointment.

1.6 Agenda and Timetable

The General Secretary presented the agenda and timetable.

The overarching theme for the meeting was 'Caring for Life', which had already been reflected in Revd Jong-Wha Park's opening sermon, and would be taken up in the three plenary presentations. Particularly important items of business were the election of the next General Secretary and action on the report of the Core Group of the Assembly Planning Committee.

The Central Committee **adopted** the agenda and timetable.

1.7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The General Secretary apologized for the late despatch of the minutes of the previous meeting, due to difficulties arising from staff reductions. Any objections or corrections could be sent to the General Secretary's office. The Moderator expressed his understanding of the situation and the Central Committee **approved** the minutes as circulated.

1.8 Sub-Committees of the Central Committee

The General Secretary presented the proposed membership of sub-committees. He drew attention to there being two vice-moderators of the Public Issues Committee, as Dr Bakkevig would not be acting as moderator until after the election of the General Secretary.

The Central Committee approved the membership of the sub-committees (see Appendix II).

2. REPORTS OF THE MODERATOR AND OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

2.1 Report of the Moderator

(The full text of the Report of the Moderator appears in The Ecumenical Review, volume 55, no.4, October 2003)

Mrs Justice Sophia Adinyira, Vice-Moderator, presiding, invited His Holiness Aram 1, Moderator, to give his report.

The Moderator took as his theme for his report the urgent need for inter-religious dialogue in the contemporary world.

In analysing the present situation, he pointed out the ambivalence of religion as a transforming but also destabilizing force, and religious plurality as a source of hope, but also of fear. He reviewed the past fifty years of ecumenical experience of inter-religious dialogue, during which common perspectives on dialogue had emerged: dialogue as a search for truth; dialogue as not compromising one's own faith; dialogue not being negotiation, but aiming at mutual empowerment; dialogue as generating hope; dialogue as not being exclusive, confrontational or judgmental in spirit.

He pleaded for the church's involvement in dialogue to be developed within a proper theological perspective, in which the following dimensions should be included: christological (dialogue and the uniqueness and universality of Christ); pneumatological (ways in which God's Spirit was at work in the lives of people of other religions); missiological (missionary outreach as God's particular but not exclusive salvific action); and eschatological (asking whether

provisional religious realities were moving towards eschatological convergence).

He concluded his plea for a theological examination of dialogue by stating that religious plurality was God's gift and that christological, pneumatological, missiological and eschatological approaches in their inter-relatedness would help us discern God's ways outside the church. Such a theology would be holistic, dynamic, inclusive (moving from christocentrism to theocentrism) and responsive (sensitive to new realities and changing contexts).

From a theological consideration of inter-religious dialogue, the Moderator moved on to practical considerations, for dialogue was no longer merely a theological issue: it was essentially an existential challenge to live together. A new culture of co-existence was taking shape. In our communities, we must provide space for the 'other', as being different is God's gift; and move on from dialogue in community to dialogue for community, since community-building is a God-given mission for the church. He pleaded for ways to be found for people of different faiths to live together in one community, accepting and respecting their God-given differences, rights and obligations. He expressed the hope that the World Mission Conference in 2005 would take up this challenge for a new missionary self-understanding and engagement.

In a final section, the Moderator explored new ways of witnessing together. The need of this troubled world was not for what the religions could say together but for what they could do together. Such action could be in the following areas: religious education, healing and reconciliation, and assuming a prophetic role.

In conclusion, he stated his strong belief that as we embarked on the process of 'a new ecumenical configuration for the 21st century', inter-religious dialogue, relations and collaboration with other religious must occupy a high priority in the Council's ecumenical witness. That would be a risky yet hopeful process.

The Moderator's final plea was that we engage with other religions in a creative process of renewal and transformation towards the eschatological fulfilment and reconciliation of the whole of humanity and creation.

2.2 Report of the General Secretary

(The full text of the Report of the General Secretary appears in *The Ecumenical Review*, volume 55, no. 4, October 2003)

Dr Marion Best, Vice-Moderator, presiding, invited Revd Dr Konrad Raiser, General Secretary, to give his report.

The General Secretary began by indicating that the present meeting of the Central Committee had on its agenda, as well as the important items of electing a General Secretary and assembly preparation, time for genuine deliberation on the theme 'Caring for Life'. He would thus devote the first part of his report to that theme.

Caring for life had always been one of the central motivations in the work of diakonia and service of the Christian church, and he gave examples of such caring that he had witnessed in recent visits to churches in Asia. In this meeting the theme would be approached from a more specific perspective, considering issues of biotechnology and work among persons with disabilities. These issues were challenging the churches to rethink their understanding of

human beings as created by God and of human life as a gift of God. More particularly, they raised the question of the meaning of humanity being made in the image of God, and our understanding of the 'goodness' of all created things. In interpreting the *imago Dei*, it was important to hear the challenge coming from the reflections among persons with disabilities. The Interim Statement prepared by the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN), 'A Church of All and for All', could help here (see Appendix III).

Over against dualistic and apocalyptic tendencies to devalue earthly life, the Christian faith had maintained that in the eyes of God all creation, including human life, is 'very good'. But, where this witness of faith became a norm of perfection to which life should correspond, it perverted God's will into a source of human power over life. Human beings must not be judged according to their degree of aesthetical, moral or physical perfection, for to do so caused profound spiritual pain, especially for persons with disabilities. Echoing the words of the EDAN statement, disability was a human condition and it was ambiguous. Human life was marked both by the God-given good of creation and by brokenness, and the brokenness of Jesus' body on the cross had become for us the very symbol of life.

Turning to developments in the WCC since the last Central Committee meeting, the General Secretary mentioned the WCC's critical financial situation resulting in reduction of budgets, programmes and staffing, and in internal reorganization. Forecasts were, however, modestly encouraging, even though the point of financial equilibrium had not yet been fully reached.

Regarding follow up to the Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, the Steering Committee of the

Special Commission had held its first meeting, at Neopolis/Thessaloniki, and had been able to revitalize the spirit of the Special Commission. He had tried personally to follow up the work of the Special Commission through visits to the Church of Greece and the Russian Orthodox Church, with gratifying results.

Concerning the war against Iraq, he remarked that, in visits to Pakistan and Indonesia, he had been struck by the fact that the unanimous rejection by the Christian churches of the policies of war had been greeted with great relief on the part of Muslim people, who saw it as a convincing refutation of the 'clash of civilizations' thesis.

In a final section, the General Secretary sought to develop further his thinking on reconfiguring the ecumenical movement. He was looking forward to a meeting in Antelias, Lebanon, in November 2003, convened by the WCC, at which experienced ecumenical co-workers from different partner networks would consider options for change and prepare a memorandum which would be the basis for further consultation and study.

This invitation by the WCC arose out of its constitutional mandate to foster 'the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations' (WCC Constitution, art. III). That did not mean that the WCC was claiming a position of central control, but rather recognized the polycentric character of the ecumenical movement.

The concept of an 'ecumenical space', used by the Special Commission, was also important in reflections on reconfiguring the ecumenical movement and the role of the WCC in it. It suggested a fundamental value option: in favour of multilateralism versus bilateralism; in favour of a conciliar model of ecumenism over

against the confessional model; in favour of open participation rather than insisting on institutional membership; in favour of a wide notion of ecumenism over against the concentration towards an ecumenism of churches as organized bodies.

The legitimate partners in this emerging conversation would be all those who, irrespective of their relationship with the WCC, recognize the basic affirmations of faith as expressed in the WCC basis, and who acknowledge that the churches, despite their institutional limitations, are the main actors in the ecumenical movement.

The partners in this conversation could be various: churches, church-related organizations or agencies, international ecumenical organizations and voluntary associations of Christian people. The future of the ecumenical movement reached beyond the constitutional limits of the WCC, but the WCC could provide the space for ecumenical objectives to be pursued in cooperation between a larger range of partners beyond the institutional churches. The guiding principle here was not membership but participation.

The General Secretary concluded by stating that, when he began as General Secretary ten years previously, he knew that the WCC and the ecumenical movement was facing a period of transition. He had wanted to facilitate the search for a new self-understanding and vision of the Council, had devoted most of his energies to that task, and was now grateful for what had been achieved through the common efforts of many. He expressed his gratitude to the Central Committee, the Officers and his colleagues, especially the Staff Leadership Group. The ecumenical calling had been an integral part of his ministry and that commitment would not end when he left his present task. Those who would carry on the task would have his

heartfelt prayers and support. But, more, he had confidence in the future, for the movement in which we were engaged was ultimately in God's hands, and God would complete what we had had to leave unfinished.

The General Secretary's report was received with sustained applause.

2.3 Discussion of Both Reports

Both reports gave rise to animated discussion. Among the many points raised were the following.

2.3.1 The Moderator's Report

Mrs Justice Sophia Adinyira, referring to her own region of West Africa, stated that they had engaged in dialogue with the help of the WCC. It was a priority and the only way for religions to speak out with a common voice

Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen thanked the Moderator for his valuable report. In face of globalized economic power that is creating hunger, followers of different religions could engage in dialogue in favour of a different world order, of peace, justice and dignity. He hoped that this perspective would be included in the programme of the Porto Alegre Assembly.

Revd Dr Hector Mendez thanked the Moderator for his profound theological examination of the issue. The report would be a useful study document. However, inter-faith dialogue must not marginalize other important items on our ecumenical agenda, such as dialogue between the different Christian traditions.

Mrs Carmencita Karagdag felt that the Moderator's report had particular resonance for Christians in Asia. Inter-faith dialogue in itself would not solve problems created by globalization. In the current critical global situation, there was a need to move beyond inter-faith dialogue to inter-faith action in solidarity.

Revd Dr Angelique Walker-Smith had two observations: there was a danger of governments intervening in inter-religious conversations in an attempt to determine their direction; also, would it be possible to move on to another level of inter-faith dialogue, so that it became an encounter, not only of beliefs, but of spiritualities.

Rt Revd Dr Govada Dyvasirvadam thought that the Moderator's report would provide inspiration to many to develop a new way of engaging in dialogue. Dialogue could encourage the promotion of common human values.

Rt Revd Michael Kehinde Stephen believed dialogue to be important in the contemporary political situation. In the midst of growing fundamentalism and violence, God was using the religions in the quest for peace in West Africa. He agreed with the Moderator that inter-faith dialogue must have high priority in the WCC's agenda. He pleaded for the production of statements on peace and non-violence suitable for liturgical use.

Mrs Selai Cati, coming from a small Pacific island state, spoke of her concern about globalization and the need to work at local community level. She thanked the Moderator for highlighting this issue.

The Moderator, responding, thanked the Committee members for their positive reception of his report. Inter-faith dialogue was a critical, delicate, risky and controversial activity. It was not a new area of activity for us, and was integral to the life of the Council. The issue was not whether we should engage in inter-faith dialogue, but how we should engage in it. In many situations, political leaders needed to be brought together for dialogue, and religious leaders working together could facilitate this. While agreeing with Dr Mendez that inter-faith dialogue is not the ecumenical priority, he wished to stress that it was an ecumenical priority.

Mrs Justice Sophia Adinyira, Vice-Moderator, thanked the Moderator for his report and his response to the discussion.

2.3.2 The General Secretary's Report

Revd John Roberts pleaded for a less introverted and more outward-looking and inclusive ecumenism. It seemed to him that the WCC was becoming more exclusive, with tighter theological criteria and a higher threshold for membership. He feared that the reconfiguration process was a mere 'rearranging of the deck chairs'. He believed that ecumenism had lost profile and support in many countries and cited as an example the cessation of courses in ecumenism in New Zealand/Aotearoa theological colleges. Ecumenical awareness needed to be reawakened in our churches.

Dr Richard Grounds applauded the fact that the Central Committee meeting had genetic technologies and contributions by persons with disabilities on its agenda. Speaking as a member of the Yuchi indigenous community in the USA, he expressed the fears of indigenous peoples at the prospect of genetic material, such as hair and blood, being gathered from them. Such health programmes were

driven by the profit motive, and those contributing most to them might benefit the least from them. Invasive genetic technologies could be an affront to the deep sensitivities of indigenous communities.

Revd Dr Maake Masango pleaded for a church with changed structures that would enable the church to be more accessible to people. Poverty might be a factor hindering structural change.

Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, referring to the reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement, pleaded for the widest possible circle of participation, from the Roman Catholic Church, at present with no global expression of its ecumenical concern, to the new Pentecostal churches of Latin America. The reconfiguration debate must not be limited to the existing partners, such as REOs, NCCs, CWCs, etc.

Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, recalling how the WCC at its origins grew out of movements, also pleaded for widest possible involvement in the reconfiguration process. Those on the margins should be brought in. We must unlearn what we had learned so as to be able to be more open to others. Some do not struggle with structures, but they do struggle with issues. They, too, should be included in our discussions and their involvement in the reconfiguration debate would make it more meaningful.

Very Revd Leonid Kishkovsky drew particular attention to one important point in the report, i.e. that the WCC should not exercise a position of central control in the ecumenical movement. He approved of the General Secretary's respect for the institutional manifestations of the ecumenical movement but also that he was not in captivity to them. He believed that the road to the future was open

and we needed the grace to walk that road. He particularly thanked the General Secretary for his personal words at the conclusion of his report.

Six members had requested the floor, and in the absence of further time for debate were invited by Dr Best to submit their observations in writing to the relevant Policy Reference Committee.

The General Secretary, responding, felt that he had communicated effectively with the Central Committee in his report and had found an echo in their response.

He did feel, however, that Revd John Roberts had not truly understood his concerns and that he had drawn a caricature of the struggles in which this Central Committee had been engaged. It was a false picture of the WCC to portray it as engaging merely in internal issues. Such self-denigration was not helpful.

He was grateful to Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson and Revd Dr Maake Masango for their comments. It had been taken for granted for too long that the church was an inclusive community, and where it was not inclusive it should be challenged. Many had been suspicious of the reconfiguration process, but the WCC did need to be open to the whole people of God. Despite hesitations, the reconfiguration process must continue, as it was rooted in the confidence that the Spirit is in it.

Responding to Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, he agreed that ordinary people are not concerned with structures, but with coping with everyday realities. We would be failing if our debate on globalization did not come down to concrete situations.

Dr Marion Best, Vice-Moderator, thanked the General Secretary for his report and his response to the discussion.

2.3.3 Later Discussion

At a later session on the same day, discussion of the two reports was resumed.

HB Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania raised a note of caution about inter-faith dialogue. There was not a true dialogue taking place between the religions. It was a dialogue by individuals, who did not always have the support of their churches. He asked if dialogue is another moratorium on witness. For Paul at Athens there had been a critical moment when he had spoken of Jesus and the resurrection, and the Athenians had laughed. He was not optimistic about inter-faith dialogue.

Referring to the General Secretary's report, he observed that some Orthodox and evangelicals view the ecumenical movement as dangerous. We needed a new enthusiasm and a new definition of what we are.

Ms Chia-Chun Tsai described how every issue in Taiwan has a political dimension. In the recent SARS outbreak the church had urged the government to cooperate with the WHO. We needed to go beyond politics to a concern for health and human rights.

Dr Bernice Powell-Jackson urged that caring for life implied caring for the whole of the created world.

Revd Dr Keith Clements reported that the Conference of European Churches had considered reconfiguration of the ecumenical

movement at its recent Assembly and had looked forward to participating in the debate as an REO. He further observed that, as well as ecumenical space, we needed ecumenical time. The debate must be begun, but time must be allowed for others to wish to decide to join us with their own agendas. The presence of parachurch bodies was important and CEC had invited such bodies to be part of their Assembly.

Dr Rubina Peroomian, on the Moderator's report, stressed the importance of education, especially religious education. Intolerance was the result of ignorance and a fear of others

Revd Fr Vsevolod Chaplin stressed the need for integrity in inter-faith dialogue. Of the Abrahamic religions, only Christianity was making theological compromises. He recommended caution in using the term 'fundamentalism'. We needed to give further consideration to it.

Msgr John Radano considered reconfiguration a challenging issue. One reason why it was necessary was the very success of the ecumenical movement and the growing number of ecumenical agencies and organizations. He had a particular concern that the theological achievements of the ecumenical movement be taken up into the reconfiguration process.

The Moderator, responding, stressed the need to understand religious pluralism. He had not intended to explore the issue of theological compromise, but emphasized the need to view other religions in the context of God's universal plan of salvation.

The General Secretary, responding, said that the object of engaging in dialogue with non-ecumenical Christian groups was not to make

them WCC members. That was not their culture. He agreed that caring for life could not be limited to caring for human life. He was grateful to Dr Clements for CEC's commitment to the reconfiguration process. He was right to plead for time. The WCC did not wish to control the agenda or the timetable. Concerning the place of theology in the reconfiguration process, he recalled that there had been a theological concern behind the clarifying of our vision of the WCC. Theological reflection on the unity of the church, in Faith and Order, was of prime importance, but that was not the only expression of the ecumenical movement, but nor either was mission, nor justice and peace. There needed to be integrity and comprehensiveness in our commitment.

Mrs Justice Sophia Adinyira, Vice-Moderator, in closing the discussion, thanked the Moderator and the General Secretary for their reports and the members of the Central Committee for their responses.

3. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Member Churches

The General Secretary reported that the Executive Committee had considered an application for membership from the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church. While generally applications for membership were not being accepted until the Central Committee meeting in February 2005, there had been extensive discussion in the Executive Committee and it had been decided that an exception could be made in this case.

This church had formerly been a member through the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, and therefore it was not a case of new

membership, but of recognizing a change in canonical and ecclesiastical status. Its independence and autocephalicity had been recognized and the two patriarchs had visited one another in their respective sees and concelebrated together, an important sign of reconciliation. The Executive Committee had thus decided to recommend acceptance of this application for membership.

He recognized that there were reservations on the part of some members about making an exception in this case, but stressed that the Central Committee had a pastoral responsibility towards the Eritrean Church. He suggested that a reservation could be appropriately expressed by an abstention when voting.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, he then moved that

The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church

be accepted as a member church of the World Council of Churches.

The Central Committee **voted in favour** (with eight abstentions) of receiving this church into full membership of the World Council of Churches.

Ambassador Yoftahe Dimetros, on behalf of the church, thanked the Central Committee for its decision.

The General Secretary further reported that the Moravian Church in America, Northern Province, and the Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, both founding members of the World Council of Churches and full members since 1948, had applied for joint membership as the Moravian Church in America. He thus, on behalf of the Executive Committee, proposed that

The Moravian Church in America

be accepted as a member church of the World Council of Churches.

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of receiving this church into full membership of the World Council of Churches.

3.2 Associate Councils

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the General Secretary recommended that the following be accepted as Associate Councils of the World Council of Churches:

Christian Council of Nigeria

Christian Council of Norway

Council of Churches of Porto Rico

Protestant Council of Rwanda

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of receiving these councils as Associate Councils.

3.3 International Ecumenical Organizations

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the General Secretary recommended that the following be accepted as International Ecumenical Organizations in working relationship with the World Council of Churches:

Global Fellowship of Christian Youth

Habitat for Humanity International

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of receiving these organizations as International Ecumenical Organizations in working relationship with the World Council of Churches.

4. PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MODERATOR

Bishop McKinley Young, Moderator of the Finance Committee, gave the Preliminary Report of the Finance Committee.

He outlined the committee's five main tasks:

1. Ratify the audited financial accounts of 2002.
2. Review the results as of July 2003 in the context of 2003 forecast to year end.
3. Approve the 2004 budget, 2005 framework budget and recommend approval of the Assembly budget.
4. Review the income development strategies of the Council.
5. Review the draft of Ethical Guidelines for non-traditional income and the statement of investment objectives and policies.

Concerning the 2002 financial accounts, he stated that the auditors had given their opinion that the accounts had been fairly presented. The balance sheet showed that there was almost complete investment coverage for the programme fund balances.

Moving on to the current year, he reported that the result at the end of July 2003 showed a total surplus of CHF2.467m, in part due to a record receipt of contributions in July. The year's cash flow to July had been positive.

He pointed out that, while the 2003 situation to date was positive, it must not be forgotten that that situation had been achieved in part at the expense of loss of staff, decreased programme activities and a lessened capacity to respond to partners.

A forecast for the rest of 2003 showed that contributions were likely to be a little less than budget, but expenditures close to budget.

Concerning the 2004 draft budget, it showed a decrease in contributions of CHF1.62m over the 2003 budget, but a slight increase in other income, coming primarily from rental income. It was a matter of concern that, while contributions for 2004 would decrease, and the withdrawal from programme balances be less, expenditures would remain relatively the same compared to those of 2003. He stressed the continuing need for cost-cutting measures. The Finance Committee would be discussing the 2004 budget in detail and bring a recommendation to the Central Committee.

They would also be recommending to the Central Committee a new way of calculating membership income as well as increasing income from non-traditional donors.

He reported that a loan of CHF6.4m had been signed for Bossey the previous month and that an agreement with the Pension Board had been reached, committing the Council to a 14% (up from 13%) fixed rate contribution to the pension plan in the long term.

The Finance Committee would also consider the Council's reserves policy and investment policy.

Questions for clarification were invited from the Central Committee.

Bishop Melvin Talbert commented that this report dealt with serious matters and requested that it be distributed in written form. The General Secretary undertook that it would be distributed. He added that members did have the agenda of the Finance Committee before them and urged them to make any comments direct to the committee moderator. He reminded members that the sessions of the Finance Committee were not closed and all Central Committee members might attend.

5. PUBLIC ISSUES

5.1 Procedures for Dealing with public Issues

Speaking to the document 'Procedures for dealing with public issues', the General Secretary outlined the process. It was the practice of the Central Committee to pronounce only on issues where they could say something that they had not said before. He distinguished between a Minute, which is brief, not primarily for public consumption, but giving directions for continuing work, and a Statement, intended for a general audience.

5.2 Proposals from the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, with staff assistance, had prepared a list of proposed actions as follows:

MINUTES on:

1. The responsibility to protect endangered populations in situations of armed violence
2. Cyprus
3. Occupied Palestinian territories

4. Zimbabwe

STATEMENTS on:

1. Post-war Iraq
2. Europe
3. Liberia

Central Committee members could within the next 24 hours propose to the Public Issues Committee further issues for consideration.

Dr Richard Grounds requested consideration of the loss of the world's languages, which was as equally important as the loss of animal and plant species. With their loss alternative perspectives on life disappear. Such a concern echoed this meeting's theme of Caring for Life.

Revd Dr Fernando Enns requested that the full text of minutes and statements be included in the minutes of the present meeting.

Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen pleaded for an examination of power. There were economic powers that were destroying life. The Council should say something about the correct use of power at an international level.

Revd Dr Riad Jarjour, on behalf of the Middle East Council of Churches, thanked the WCC for its role with regard to the Middle East. Its stance had improved relations between Christians and Muslims throughout the Arab world. The solidarity shown by the WCC was appreciated at all levels. He particularly thanked the churches and the WCC for their solidarity over war in Iraq. He expressed the hope that we would soon see positive results.

His Holiness Aram I shared the sentiments expressed by Dr Jarjour.

The Central Committee passed the Executive Committee's list of proposed actions to the Public Issues Committee for their consideration.

5.3 First Report of the Public Issues Committee

Dr Marion Best presented the First Report of the Public Issues Committee. The Committee had discussed possible action on the following public issues:

- Minute on the Responsibility to Protect
- Minute on Cyprus
- Minute on the occupied Palestinian Territories
- Minute on Zimbabwe
- Statement on post-war Iraq
- Statement on Europe
- Statement on Liberia

Submitted proposals from the floor in written form by members of the Central Committee within 24 hours of the announcement of the proposal from the Executive Committee and by the Programme Committee:

- The loss of the world's indigenous languages
- Rwanda and the Great Lakes region
- Sudan

The Committee submitted the text of the four Minutes requested, for approval at a later session. Their next meetings would be devoted to the preparation of the Statements.

Concerning the written proposals received from Central Committee members, the Committee proposed dealing with them in the following manner:

The Public Issues Committee is concerned with the issue of the loss of **indigenous languages**. According to UNESCO, on average one of the world's 6,500 languages falls silent every two weeks, many of them carrying a storehouse of indigenous knowledge. The Public Issues Committee therefore asks the Indigenous Desk of the WCC to explore an appropriate response from the WCC to this threat.

The **Great Lakes Region** has been in the throes of high level conflicts and human rights violations since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Sporadic ethnic violence continues to plague the region. The Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Lusaka and Sun City did achieve a level of success in terms of power sharing agreements between various warring factions. However, much work needs to be done before a lasting and durable peace can endure. The recent elections in Rwanda and the developments in Burundi following the Arusha Agreements are signs of hope. The churches of the region are involved in the reintegration and rehabilitation of refugees, displaced people and demobilized soldiers. They need all the assistance partners can give.

The WCC and AACC are requested to monitor the developments and to facilitate and channel human and material resources to the churches involved in humanitarian assistance programmes and in the promotion of peace. They are particularly requested to help in the process of identifying an enabler to facilitate better understanding and to promote peace between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

The World Council of Churches has constantly monitored developments in **Sudan** as well as the progress made in the IGAD Peace Process. It noted that Sudan is the focus of DOV for 2003 in view of the work being done by the churches in Sudan and the Sudan Ecumenical Forum for peace and reconciliation in the country.

The Central Committee approved, with one vote against, the actions proposed by the Public Issues Committee.

5.4 Second Report of the Public Issues Committee

Revd Dr Trond Bakkevig, presented the Second Report of the Public Issues Committee, assisted by Mr Peter Weiderud, Director of CCIA.

The Public Issues Committee had been pleased to welcome Mr Weiderud, who was proving a very capable director. The Committee had thanked the staff for their preparatory work, their work during the meeting itself, and for what they would do after. Attention was drawn once again to the distinction between a minute and a statement (see 5.1 above).

The discussion in the Committee had been frank and forward-looking and he was grateful to the members of the Committee. Central Committee members had made comments on their First Report and these had been taken into consideration.

5.4.1 Minutes

Dr Bakkevig then presented the proposed Minutes as follows:

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches meeting at Potsdam, Germany in February 2001, adopted a document titled: *“The Protection of Endangered Populations in Situations of Armed Violence: Toward an Ecumenical Ethical Approach”*. It commended the document to the churches “for further study, reflection and use – as they may deem appropriate – in their continuing dialogues with policy makers, governments, international organizations, research bodies, groups advocating large scale non-violent civilian intervention and other peace initiatives, and with civil society at large”. The churches were requested to share the results of these studies, reflections and dialogues and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) was asked to report back to the Central Committee at a later date.

The members of the Central Committee have received as background documentation, CCIA’s 2003 report titled *“The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections”*. The report recalls the process that led to the presentation of the above document at Potsdam. It contains the summary of reactions received from churches, refers to other relevant documents on the subject, identifies elements to be included in the proposed follow up process and makes recommendations to the Central Committee.

Since the adoption of the document by the Central Committee at Potsdam there have been a number of significant events like the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States, the consequent military strikes in Afghanistan and more recently, the war on Iraq and the military intervention in the Solomon Islands, that have added new dimensions to the debate on “humanitarian intervention”. There is also a growing fear by many people in the world of attacks on innocent civilians and of correlated responses by governments to

curtail civil liberties. These situations further underline the role of the United Nations and international law.

In the period since the 2001 Central Committee, only a few churches and related groups have studied and reflected on this issue and have produced documents and other materials, which they have shared with the CCIA. While most of the churches have not formally taken any action, they have expressed that they consider the issue of the protection of endangered populations of great significance. Circles outside the ecumenical movement too have been debating this issue at the non-governmental and inter-governmental levels.

The CCIA's 2003 report underlines the importance of having an appropriate title for the document; the need to deepen and clarify the ethical and theological criteria for discernment; and the importance of reflecting on issues of human security, sovereignty, human rights, international law, democracy and other concerns. Finally, the report points out the divergence of views amongst the churches as indicated in their responses on just peace and the use of military force as a last resort. While some churches have specific criteria for the use of force others are critical of exercising this option.

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Geneva, 26 August to 2 September, 2003 therefore:

Receives the report of the CCIA "*The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections*" as directed by it at the meeting in Potsdam, February 2001, and endorses its recommendations.

Expresses its appreciation to the churches and related ecumenical groups that have responded to its call for study and reflection.

Encourages member churches to continue the study process and to share their insights with the CCIA.

Requests the CCIA:

- to continue the study process, within the framework of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) and in consultation with the DOV Reference Group
- to collaborate closely with ecumenical organizations that are working on this issue and taking into consideration the emerging developments
- to keep the churches and academic institutions involved in the study process
- to report back to the next WCC Assembly

Minute on Cyprus

The WCC Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland from 26 August to 2 September, 2003, welcomed the report and recommendations of the International Affairs staff delegation to Cyprus from 31 March to 3 April, 2003. Recognizing that the period from now to May 1st, 2004, when the Republic of Cyprus will become a full member of the European Union, is extremely critical in terms of the kind of settlement that will evolve, it commits itself to keeping the Cyprus problem high on its international affairs agenda.

While welcoming steps towards reconciliation between the two communities, the Central Committee states clearly that the recent easing of movement along the cease-fire line does not constitute a settlement of the Cyprus problem. The WCC reiterates its position that the only acceptable framework for a viable and permanent settlement of the Cyprus problem is that of the United Nations

binding resolution and international legality. We pray that the Turkish Cypriot leader will agree to resume negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, on the basis of the Secretary General's comprehensive settlement plan, as soon as possible.

The Central Committee calls on all WCC member churches to pay special attention to the above mentioned report and lend its support to the WCC General Secretary and the staff and members of its Commission of Churches on International Affairs in implementing the outlined recommendations in solidarity with the Church of Cyprus and all relevant actors and to bring an updated report to the WCC Executive Committee in February 2004.

Minute on the occupied Palestinian Territories

The WCC Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland from 26 August to 2 September, 2003, took note of the efforts undertaken by the WCC General Secretary and staff of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, to implement the resolutions of the Central and Executive Committees since February 2001, to end the illegal occupation of Palestine.

A year after the *Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel* (EAPPI) was launched within the 2002 focus of the Decade to Overcome Violence and its campaign to *End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East*, the Central Committee welcomes with appreciation the partnership provided by churches and specialized ecumenical ministries that support this new ecumenical initiative of the WCC. In particular, the Central Committee recognizes the courageous witness of the Ecumenical Accompaniers, who volunteer to serve the Church of Jesus Christ by standing in active solidarity with a

people struggling for freedom, justice and peace. The Central Committee reaffirms its endorsement to this programme and asks all WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to actively engage in it.

In addition, the Central Committee heard with heavy hearts the message sent by the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem and the observations made by the CCIA and ACT delegation during their recent visit to the occupied Palestinian Territories. We were especially concerned with the humanitarian consequences of continued closures, curfews, extra-judicial killings and suicide bombings as well as the “separation wall” being erected by the Israeli authorities. The Central Committee asks all members to condemn such actions and to join the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches, Communities and Institutions in Jerusalem in their daily “Prayers for just peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land”. The Central Committee further regrets that in spite of its appeals to the government of Israel, they have still refused to recognize the election of HB Patriarch Irineos I, as head of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Endorsing the CCIA’s analysis of the *Road Map to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, the Central Committee recommits itself to the WCC direction, long-term policies and actions developed since 1998, which need to remain constant and of high priority. In this light, the Central Committee calls on the WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to intensify their efforts on behalf of the ecumenical campaign launched in 2002 and to increase their humanitarian relief and rehabilitation efforts. It also asks the General Secretary and staff of International Affairs to give visibility to all ecumenical efforts to end the occupation of Palestine. In this regard the Central

Committee recognizes the need for the speedy establishment of the *Jerusalem Ecumenical Centre of the Heads of Churches in association with the WCC and MECC*.

Minute on Zimbabwe

The present socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe is a serious challenge to the churches in the country and a matter of concern to the wider ecumenical family. The challenges faced by the people and churches in Zimbabwe are multifaceted and complex. The 'fast track' land resettlement programme implemented by the government of Zimbabwe over the last two years has led to serious human rights violations. The process of resettlement is carried out in a manner that has circumvented legal procedures and created an air of uncertainty amongst the people, particularly the new settlers. The disruption caused to the commercial agricultural sector by 'fast track' resettlement has endangered food security. The government's handling of the situation through recourse to violence and introduction of contentious legislative measures has compounded the crisis, isolating the country and bringing it to the brink of ruin.

We share the pain and suffering of the people of Zimbabwe as a result of escalating violence and repression of fundamental human rights by the state and groups encouraged and supported by the government. The violence, intimidation, unlawful arrest and torture perpetrated by the police, ruling party militia and other state agents must come to an end. We particularly deplore actions of the government to introduce new laws and amend existing laws with the intention to clamp down on political opponents, human rights defenders, representatives of trade unions, students, teachers, lawyers, and jurists. We express solidarity with the churches of Zimbabwe as they bear witness to the challenge of the present crisis,

and affirm the Executive Committee Statement from September 2001.

We urge member churches of the WCC to condemn acts of violence. We encourage the Zimbabwe Council of Churches as they strive to increase their efforts to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the government and the opposition in the country in order that they may together address the basic grievances of the people.

We call on the General Secretary, the Africa Peace Monitoring Group and the Commission of Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to:

- continue their support of the churches to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict, restore the rule of law and put an end to arbitrary arrests, torture and killings
- support and encourage the efforts of the Zimbabwe churches to work towards constitutional reforms that reflect the aspirations of the people on the principles of good governance, rule of law and democratic norms
- support and encourage the initiatives of Zimbabwe churches to redress the inequities of land distribution
- provide a platform to the churches of Zimbabwe for a comprehensive, inclusive and coordinated ecumenical accompaniment to facilitate sharing and exchange of information and analysis, and to undertake advocacy for peaceful resolution of the conflict

Discussion

Mr Naboth Muchopa regretted that the minute on Zimbabwe contained no reference to the issue of inequitable land ownership and the failure of the British government to implement the Lancaster

House agreement. White farmers also had a responsibility for the present situation. It was important not to be one-sided. Dr Bakkevig, responding, stated that the Executive Committee's Statement of September 2001 had said something about this.

HE Archbishop Aristarchos Peristeris was grateful for the support of the WCC for the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

The Central Committee, in separate votes, unanimously adopted the Minute on the Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections; the Minute on Cyprus; the Minute on the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and the Minute on Zimbabwe.

5.4.2 Statement on Iraq

Dr Bakkevig presented the proposed Statement on Iraq (given here in the form in which it was adopted):

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26 August to 2 September, five months after the pre-emptive, illegal attack on Iraq,

Recalling all of the WCC's previous relevant policy statements on Iraq, in particular its statements made since the meeting of the Central Committee in 2002;

Condemning the human rights violations of the previous regime evidenced for example by the discovery of mass graves;

Reaffirming its conviction that the war on Iraq was immoral, ill-advised and in breach of the principles of the UN Charter;

Reaffirming also the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq;

Noting the inalienable and fundamental rights and freedoms of the Iraqi people;

Reaffirming also, the right of the Iraqi people to freely choose their political destiny, non-intervention in their own internal affairs, full sovereignty over the natural resources of their country and economic and social reconstruction;

Stressing the importance for the occupying powers to immediately allow the United Nations to work with the people of Iraq to form a representative, full and equitable participatory government based on the rule of law, free of influence of the occupying powers;

Reaffirming the importance of the non-military means for the nuclear disarmament of Iraq and for its eventual confirmation by United Nations weapons inspectors and *recognizing once again* the need for the whole Middle East region to be free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons by non- military means;

Reiterating the need for member states to support the United Nations in playing a leading role in humanitarian relief, the reconstruction of Iraq, disarmament, protection of human rights and the restoration and establishment of local and national governance structures;

Welcoming all humanitarian assistance provided to the people of Iraq by the international community and the churches world-wide, in particular under the umbrella of *Action by Churches Together* –

International (ACT) in cooperation with the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC);

The WCC Central Committee,

Concerned about the prevailing lawlessness and insecurity in Iraq and the potential impact of the daily violence on the Iraqi people, humanitarian and UN personnel and the transitional process;

Noted with regret that over 80 per cent of the population of Iraq is now estimated to be living in poverty while it is estimated that the total debt of the country is within the range of USD 100 –150 billion (excluding its outstanding reparation claims from the 1991 Gulf War), which has a crippling effect on the life and future of the Iraqi people;

Continues to be concerned about the long-term political, social, cultural and religious consequences of this war and the continued occupation, especially the negative impact on Christian-Muslim relations, the exacerbation of intense hatred towards the “western world” strengthening extremist ideologies, breeding further global insecurity and increased emigration of Christians from the Middle East;

Encouraged by the increased role and involvement of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, including the creation of a new UN assistance mission to support the Secretary General in the fulfilment of his mandate under UN SC Resolution 1483;

Dismayed by the actions taken by the United Nations Security Council subsequent to the war on Iraq, giving the occupation an open ended mandate, an ambiguous role to the United Nations, and

granting the occupying powers the right to legally and financially administer Iraq, that have the propensity to undermine its role as primary upholder of international peace and security;

Remains concerned that there is no clear timetable for an end to the military occupation and the earliest possible restoration of Iraqi sovereignty;

Convinced that it is essential to place human rights and the rule of law at the forefront of efforts to encourage the building of representative, democratic institutions;

Remains convinced that diplomatic efforts involving the states of the region will still be needed to address outstanding conflict issues in the Middle East, most notably the need to end the illegal occupation of Palestine;

Noted with appreciation the Statement “Church Leaders United Against War” and all efforts of the WCC General Secretary and staff prior and during the war on Iraq and *recognized* particularly the appreciation expressed by the Arab world, including the Churches in the Middle East and the MECC.

Therefore, the WCC Central Committee,

Deplores the invasion and occupation of Iraq by foreign forces as an act of aggression in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law;

Declares that preventive and pre-emptive war violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter;

Welcomes the courageous stance of all WCC member churches, in particular the churches in the USA, UK and Australia, in opposing this war and working tirelessly for peace;

Welcomes the lifting of economic sanctions against Iraq after thirteen years;

Opposes the occupying powers taking advantage of their military force to establish military bases in Iraq for their own use, and benefiting from rebuilding Iraq or from the sale of its resources;

Calls on the UN Security Council to insist on the establishment of a legitimate, sovereign, elected and inclusive government as early as possible and for the immediate and orderly withdrawal of the occupying forces, handing over transitional administration to the United Nations;

Encourages member states of the UN to raise the concern of the legality of this war in the general debate of the United Nations General Assembly;

Asks states to participate in setting up a transparent mechanism for arbitration and cancel the Iraqi debt as it has emerged out of loans that merely financed the previous Iraqi regime;

Requests the relevant UN mechanisms to promptly investigate, gather any evidence of violations of human rights of the previous regime, war crimes and crimes against humanity, violations of international humanitarian law including the illegal resort to war, and to prosecute all such crimes;

Calls on the occupying powers to provide for full reparations to the Iraqi people for damages caused and precipitated by the unlawful use of military force, and to ensure the removal of cluster bombs, depleted uranium and un-detonated munitions;

Condemns all forms of violence, the killing of religious leaders, all acts of destruction and looting in Iraq, including the deadly terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, and ***mourns*** the loss of lives of the UN personnel who were in Baghdad to serve the humanitarian needs and work for the restoration of the sovereignty of the people of Iraq, particularly the death of Mr Sergio Vieira de Mello;

Urges all those concerned to allow full unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance, and to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian, United Nations and associated personnel;

Calls on the churches world-wide and the international community to demonstrate a collective and cohesive commitment to support the people of Iraq, whose plight has not been given proper recognition in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their country;

Urges the Iraqi religious communities, to uphold fundamental human rights, including religious freedom, the urgency of establishing the rule of law, ensuring the rights of all religious communities and equal rights of all citizens;

Affirms the role of the churches of Iraq, in collaboration with other Iraqi religious communities, in the social, economic and political reconstruction of Iraq, including the creation of platforms of inter-religious dialogue;

Reiterates its commitment, together with the churches of Iraq, to dialogue and cooperation among religious communities. Such cooperation, grounded in the respect of cultural diversity and religious plurality, is essential for the safeguarding of national unity and in preventing or diffusing communal tensions;

Prays for the people and the churches of Iraq and their faithful as they continue to be witnesses of hope.

Discussion

Revd Dr Clifton Kirkpatrick was grateful for the Statement and for the support given by the WCC to the US churches in the stance they had taken. The Statement gave indications of what should be done next. In the clause beginning 'Condemns', in view of the bombing of a mosque the previous weekend, he proposed adding 'the killing of religious leaders'.

HH Aram I, in the second clause beginning 'Urges', as well of the equal rights of all citizens, proposed adding 'the rights of all religious communities'.

Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen spoke of the pressure Latin American countries were under from the USA to provide troops for the occupation of Iraq. In the clause beginning 'Prays', he proposed adding 'the people of Iraq'.

Bishop Tom Butler appreciated the work that had gone into the Statement, but felt that it looked too much to the past and was not sufficiently forward-looking. He regretted that it made no reference to the good of removing an oppressive dictator. He understood the reason for mentioning our mourning the loss of lives of UN

personnel, in view of our location in Geneva, but we should surely mourn the loss of all those who had died. While appreciating the Statement, he would be abstaining in the vote.

Very Revd Leonid Kishkovsky also felt that reference should be made to the suffering of the people of Iraq under the Saddam Hussein regime. In the clause beginning 'Affirms', he proposed adding 'welcomes the establishment of the inter-religious council'.

Bishop Federico Pagura was grateful for the force of the Statement and felt it important to approve a document condemning such illegal action. In Latin America they had admired the stance of the US churches. In the clause beginning 'Welcomes', he would like to see included the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and the US Catholic bishops.

HG Archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim proposed that the words 'particularly churches' be omitted from the second clause beginning 'Urges'. It belonged to all religious communities to uphold fundamental human rights, and there was no need to single out the churches.

Dr Bakkevig, responding, accepted many of the proposed changes. Responding to Bishop Butler, he said that there was a reason for the specific mention of the loss of UN personnel as this had been the first instance of a direct attack on UN staff. Responding to Fr Kishkovsky, he stated that they had no report on this, but proposed a different formulation: 'the creation of platforms of inter-religious dialogue.' He agreed with Archbishop Karim that the specific reference to churches could be omitted.

After discussion, the Central Committee, with two abstentions, **adopted** as amended the Statement on Iraq.

5.4.3 Statement on Liberia

Dr Bakkevig presented the proposed Statement on Liberia (given here in the form in which it was adopted):

1. Liberia has been in the throes of civil strife and wars since the 1980's. A peace agreement signed between the Liberian army and the rebels resulted in the election of Charles Taylor as President of Liberia in 1997. In 1999, Taylor was accused of destabilizing neighbouring countries, especially Sierra Leone, from which he profited massively by supporting rebels operating in the diamond mining areas. In May 2001, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Liberia because of Taylor's activities to destabilize the region by promoting conflicts and trading weapons for diamonds with the rebels in Sierra Leone.
2. Meanwhile, rebels belonging to Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) who were fighting Taylor's army, initially operating from bases in Guinea, made progress and gained more and more territory in the North and West. Also, another rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), gained control of strategic areas in the South and East, thus cutting off Taylor from his other main source of revenue – timber. Around March 2003, fighting intensified and the rebels opened a number of fronts and between them were able to control two thirds of the country before reaching the outskirts of the capital, Monrovia.

3. As a result of the escalation in fighting a large number of people, including internally displaced persons and refugees from neighbouring countries, were again uprooted and forced to move in search of safety and security. Soldiers from Taylor's army who were not paid wages for several months indulged in widespread looting and plunder. The complete breakdown of law and order and disruption of humanitarian services further added to the suffering of the already beleaguered population.
4. On the 4th of June a high level Liberian Peace Conference was convened in Accra, Ghana, under the auspices of the United Nations – International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL). While the talks were in progress the UN Special Court in Sierra Leone for war crimes indicted Taylor for crimes against humanity and issued warrants for his arrest. After considerable difficulties and painstaking negotiations the parties finally agreed to a cease-fire on the 17th of June, 2003. Despite the cease-fire agreement fighting continued as Taylor prolonged his departure from Monrovia and the rebels tried to make last minute gains.
5. On the 1st of August, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 497 (2003). The Resolution authorized the establishment of a multi-national force to support the implementation of the 17th of June cease-fire agreement including establishment of conditions for the initial stages of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities to help establish and maintain security in the interim period, until the installation of a successor authority. On the 18th of August, ECOWAS and the United Nations brokered a power sharing agreement between the current government, the rebels, political parties and civil society, for a transitional government that will take charge in October

2003 and prepare the country for democratic elections before the end of 2005.

6. The leadership of the Liberian Council of Churches remained present in Accra and in consultation with the representatives of the parties to the conflict through the duration of the peace talks and kept churches world-wide informed of developments. The AACC and churches in Africa and the US called on the African leaders and the United Nations to work towards a comprehensive resolution of the conflict. The World Council of Churches sent letters of support to the churches in Liberia and to the UN Secretary General calling on him to support the Accra Peace Initiative and encourage the parties to agree on the presence of a credible peace keeping force.
7. The Central Committee meeting in Geneva, Switzerland 26th August – 2nd September 2003 therefore:
 - a) ***Expresses*** its appreciation and support for the role of ECOWAS, ECOMIL, AU, the inter-religious council, the churches and leaders of the Liberian Council of Churches for their efforts to promote peace and accompany the parties to the conflict in their negotiations at Accra, Ghana, to arrive at an agreement to cease hostilities and to form a transitional government;
 - b) ***Condemns*** the spate of violence unleashed by the military forces of the government of Liberia under the leadership of Charles Taylor and the LURD and MODEL rebel groups that resulted in horrific conditions and untold human sufferings which left the majority of the people on the streets for days with little or no access to clean water, sanitation and food;

- c) *Welcomes* the UN Security Council Resolution 1497 (2003) and expects that an all inclusive political framework agreed between the parties on the 18th of August, for a transitional government, can be implemented and a conducive climate created for free and fair elections in Liberia before the end of 2005;
- d) *Urges* member churches to uphold and support the peace and advocacy work of the Liberian Council of Churches and its members in prayer and thanksgiving for their continued witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace;
- e) *Calls* on churches and church-related agencies around the world particularly those in the United States, because of its historical links with Liberia, to provide much needed humanitarian assistance to the people and to accompany the churches as they seek to promote a just and durable peace, and restore harmonious community life where all people can contribute to the establishment of a society with justice and dignity for all.

Discussion

Mrs Justice Sophia Adinyira proposed adding in clause 7 (a) appreciation and support for the role of ECOWAS. Dr Bakkevig accepted the proposed addition.

The Central Committee unanimously **adopted** as amended the Statement on Liberia.

5.4.4 Statement on Europe

Dr Bakkevig presented the Background document to the Statement on Europe. The last time the WCC had spoken on Europe was in

1992 and an update in light of later developments was necessary. There had been changes made to the Background in the light of comments made.

Background

There have been significant developments and changes within Europe in recent years, throughout the continent. In particular, since the last meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches a year ago, decisions have been made to enlarge the European Union with ten new members and, linked to that, to draft a new European Constitution.

Europe is a diverse and evolving region, with multiple geographic, economic and religious parameters. In the final years of the 20th century, Europe has experienced some of the most profound changes in its history. The revolutions which swept through Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 liberated millions of people from repressive and often violent regimes. The momentous events of the last decade mark an end to the partitioned Europe of Yalta, and they offer the real hope of a new and inclusive community from the North Sea to the Caspian – and beyond. The enlargement of the European Union to the east and south in 2004, and the expansion of NATO, along with the proposals for a new European Constitution by the Convention on the Future of Europe, will be decisive factors in shaping the destiny of the continent.

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva 26 August – 2 September 2003, recognizes the profound and dynamic changes taking place across the European continent. The last resolution on Europe was adopted by the Central Committee, 21-28 August 1992; in it, the Central Committee:

- Alerted member churches to the promise and challenge of greater European integration.
- Recognized the progress made by the EC in redressing regional imbalances, combating poverty and advancing the social rights of all its peoples.
- Affirmed the need to speak out and maintain dialogue on poverty, economic inequities, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, environment and relationships with other European states and with the two-thirds world.
- Drew attention to the presence of ecumenical institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg and to the resources and expertise they offer to the churches.
- Noted with appreciation the role played by CEC (Conference of European Churches) and recommended enhanced cooperation between EECCS (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society), CEC and the WCC on matters of concern related to European unity and its global implications.

The concerns of the ecumenical movement and the member churches in relation to the European institutions remain as identified in the WCC Central Committee resolution of 1992. Most of these concerns are handled primarily by European actors in the ecumenical movement, such as the Conference of European Churches (CEC), in the areas of European integration, economic issues, democracy, human rights, bioethics and religious liberty, or Eurodiaconia in addressing economic and social issues, or the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) for refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities, or *Aprodev* in regard to development policies. The role of the WCC is to work with European ecumenical organizations by bringing in the global dimension, to provide

support when requested, and to collaborate on issues of common concern.

Since the resolution 11 years ago, there have been major changes within as well as outside the European Union. Some boundaries have broken down, and new ones have been created.

Within the European Union three new, economically advanced and net contributing members have entered the community, making the total 15 member states. Twelve of the 15 members have come together into the common currency, the Euro. There has been a gradual development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the establishment of a Rapid Reaction Force, in particular as a result of the experience with the war in the former Yugoslavia. After the European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002, accession agreements have been signed with ten countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, who will become members of the EU in 2004.

Related to the enlargement, the Convention on the Future of Europe presented its draft Constitution in June 2003; in article 51, the role of the churches is affirmed in what is a new way for the EU: “The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.”.... “The Union equally respects the status of philosophical and non-confessional organizations.”.... “Recognizing their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organizations.”

The European Union also has developed its cooperation with its neighbours and the rest of the world. In the “Barcelona process”,

we have seen increased cooperation with the countries south and east of the Mediterranean. There is a treaty establishing the European Community on the one hand and The Georgetown Agreement establishing the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) on the other. Together, they formulated in Benin, June 2000, a partnership agreement called the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, that replaces the former Lomé Convention, affirming among other things their commitment to work together towards the achievements of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

There have been significant social and economic changes in the continent, both within and outside the EU. Many countries in the former Soviet Union have a significantly lower GDP, compared to 15 years ago. The social security systems in Western Europe are challenged with an ageing population and changing economic conditions. The Common Agricultural Policy, which still is using the lion's share of the EU budget, is challenged for being socially, financially, environmentally as well as globally untenable.

Since 1992, several sub-regional structures for cooperation have developed, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), contributing further to European integration. Important contributions, in particular relating to human rights, minority rights, democracy, the rule of law and development of civil society, have also been made by the more inclusive European institutions, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE.

NATO, the military alliance remaining from the Cold War, has also changed. It has developed its crisis management capacity, contributed its first out-of-area operations in Kosovo and

Afghanistan, reached an agreement of cooperation with Russia and invited Central and Eastern European countries to become new members. However, in particular during the last two years, there has been a growing division between the US and European member states on fundamental issues of security – pre-emptive strike, international law, the role of the UN and how to meet the threat from weapons of mass destruction.

The European ecumenical structures relating to the European institutions have changed and developed over the past decade. One important example is the merger of the Brussels-based European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the development of a closer working relation with the Roman Catholic COMECE (Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community). One specific expression of this ecumenical climate is the Charta Oecumenica, which provides a tool for furthering cooperation between churches on the local, national and European level.

The religious and ecumenical context of Europe is complex and varied, and religious pluralism must be recognized by churches and societies alike. The great majority of religious adherents is Christian, from the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions. Significant indigenous Muslim communities exist, particularly in the Balkans, the Caucasus regions and other parts of Russia, alongside multiple immigrant religious communities. Religious affiliation is to some extent related to geography, and has been a decisive factor in cultural and social development. The level of religious practice varies highly across the region. In Western Europe, historical churches have experienced a decline in membership, while many diaspora churches from the South have taken root, parallel with new

forms of religious faith. Many churches in Central and Eastern Europe have undergone a powerful spiritual and material revival over the last decade, following the period of communist persecution.

Religious and ecumenical relations are similarly complex. In some places the ecumenical idea has become part of the self-identity of churches, but there are also churches and religious communities in conflict. In many countries, the period has been marked by the return of the churches and religion to the “public sphere” as important political and social actors. The churches are called to contribute to and influence the developments which are shaping Europe. Christianity has influenced European history, and the contribution and responsibility of the churches and religious communities, including Judaism and Islam, must be recognized.

The significance of this period calls WCC member churches to reflect on, and engage in, developments in Europe.

The Central Committee received, with one abstention, the Background document to the Statement on Europe.

Dr Bakkevig then presented the Statement on Europe itself (given here in the form in which it was adopted):

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva August 26 – September 2, 2003;

1. ***Takes note*** of the previous WCC Central Committee resolution on Europe in 1992, and of the significant developments which have affected Europe during the last decade.

2. ***Appreciates*** the particular roles played by the Conference of European Churches and other European ecumenical organizations, working closely in collaboration with Roman Catholic partner organizations, in monitoring and influencing European developments and integration.
3. ***Welcomes*** the increased ecumenical cooperation in Europe, including the process stimulated by the *Charta Oecumenica*.
4. ***Reaffirms*** the unique roles in the European integration process of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, being the most inclusive of the European institutions.
5. (a) ***Welcomes*** the accession of 10 new members from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean to the European Union, as a major accomplishment to overcome the dividing line of the Cold War and encourages an integration process towards real unity and equality in Europe.

(b) ***Cautions*** against the risk of new divisions emerging along historical, religious, ethnic and economic fault-lines in Europe, both between Eastern and Western Christian cultures, and between Christianity and Islam.

(c) Therefore, ***urges*** that priority is given to the integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the European Union, and to deepening cooperation, peace-building and integration between member states of the European Union and the countries of the Western Balkans and of the former Soviet Union.

6. (a) ***Insists*** that the eradication of racism and poverty, respect for human rights (political, civil, economic, social and cultural) and respect for God's creation should be the overarching objectives for the European Union's development policies and that these objectives are fully integrated in the Union's policies in other areas such as agriculture, fisheries, trade, environment, and common foreign and security policy.
- (b) ***Urges*** the European Union to increase its efforts to develop international law and standards on human rights, humanitarian law and corporate social responsibility, to meet the challenges of globalization and to work for the recognition and functioning of the International Criminal Court.
7. (a) ***Recognizes*** the fundamental changes taking place in European security arrangements, and welcomes efforts to strengthen multilateral common foreign and security policy in the region, guided by fundamental principles of human rights, ethics and morality, and to work towards comprehensive security arrangements based on common and human security.
- (b) ***Challenges*** the practice and intention of individual countries and alliances to intervene militarily without the mandate of the UN Security Council, insists on the need for all European states to uphold the international framework of the UN Charter, and underlines the need for any military action to comply with international law.
8. (a) ***Recognizes*** the central role of Christianity and the contribution of other religions to European history and

civilization, which ought to be reflected in the preamble of the draft European Constitution, and the renewed role of religion in the social, political and cultural life of European states and societies.

- (b) *Welcomes and affirms* the recognition of the specific contribution of the churches and religious communities as partners in dialogue with the European institutions, as proposed in the draft Constitution of the European Union.
 - (c) *Emphasizes* the importance of monitoring church-state relations, rights of religious minorities and religious freedom, and the need to respect the collective and individual rights of religious believers, while recognizing different models of church-state relations and diverse cultural and historical models across Europe.
9. (a) *Encourages* the churches in Europe to maintain and strengthen relations of fellowship, solidarity and mutual exchange with churches in other regions, and underlines the importance for churches of closely monitoring developments and speaking out in areas where Europe has a particular global responsibility, including trade and development, environment, peace and conflict prevention, migration and asylum, trafficking of human beings and racism, in order to uphold and strengthen the principles of justice and human rights.
- (b) *Recognizing* the dangers of transatlantic divides in global security policies, encourages the member churches in Europe and the USA to work together in dialogue and cooperation,

and to seek to influence their governments towards a multilateral approach for global peace and justice.

10. *Appreciates* the efforts of WCC staff to monitor the major developments in Europe, and commends the policy update on Europe to WCC member churches and asks the WCC General Secretary and staff to continue these efforts with the member churches, CEC and other European church- and ecumenical organizations, and to bring a further progress report to the WCC Central Committee in 2005.

Discussion

Revd Wies Houweling felt that further work needed to be done. She would welcome a more specific study document on Europe.

Revd Dr Keith Clements, speaking on behalf of the churches of Europe, thanked the Committee for its work and appreciated the cooperation between the Conference of European Churches and the WCC. He mentioned recent developments in CEC: the integration of the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society into CEC as its Commission on Church and Society and the growing relationship between CEC and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe. He was pleased to see mention of the Charta Oecumenica.

Concerning the draft European Constitution, it was important that Christianity should be acknowledged in its preamble. He appealed to European member churches to lobby their governments on this prior to the Inter-Governmental Conference in October.

HH Aram I questioned the formulation in clause 8 (a) 'fundamental contributions of Christianity and other religions'. He proposed amending to 'the central role of Christianity and the contribution of other religions'.

Revd Cibebe Kuss was pleased to see the recognition in clause 9 (a) of the responsibility of Europe towards other world regions.

Bishop Rolf Koppe would also like to see a study document, fuller than the present text, and wondered if CEC and WCC could cooperate in producing such a common study document. Such cooperation was to be encouraged as there was too much overlap at present.

Mr Naboth Muchopa appreciated the Background document and was pleased to see in it mentions of refugees and asylum seekers, and racism and xenophobia. Black people and other minorities facing discrimination was a feature of life in present-day Europe. He proposed adding 'eradication of racism' to 'eradication of poverty' in clause 6 (a).

The General Secretary, responding to the request for further study, accepted the need for it. The present Background and Statement was more than a minute, but nor was it a policy statement: it was more an update. He proposed an amendment at the end of clause 10, replacing 'take action as appropriate' with 'bring a further progress report to the WCC Central Committee in 2005'.

Dr Bakkevig accepted the proposed amendments.

The Central Committee, with one abstention, **adopted** as amended the Statement on Europe.

The Central Committee received the Second Report of the Public Issues Committee with appreciation.

6. PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

6.1 First Report of the Programme Committee

Revd Fr Dr Kondothra George reported that the Programme Committee had begun its work the previous Sunday on a philosophical note. They had been reminded of the saying by Pericles that you cannot step twice into the same river. The scene the Committee was dealing with was a constantly changing one.

Ms Geneviève Jacques had been welcomed to the meeting in her new role as Director of Programmes.

He described the fourfold mandate of the Programme Committee at this time:

1. To receive and comment on the Activities Report
2. To receive and comment on the reports from commissions and advisory bodies
3. To prepare for the Pre-Assembly Evaluation
4. To review and propose recommendations for programme plans 2003-2005.

The Committee had received a presentation on the new internal WCC structures with its 14 core programmes, and had expressed its gratitude for the work done in the internal reorganization.

Revd Ruth Bottoms stated that the Committee had examined the Activities Report 2002-2003, including reports from those commissions and advisory bodies that had met. They had been given three particular examples of where the work of the WCC is making a difference: Iraq, youth at the World Social Forum, and ecumenical learning at Bossey. Having examined the Activities Report, the Committee was now forwarding it to the Central Committee for reception, and, in doing so, was commending all the staff teams for the way they had coped with changes and reduction in personnel and financial resources.

She then gave a summary of their discussions on the programme, together with appropriate recommendations.

1 Strengthening the One Ecumenical Movement

This programme is carried out primarily by the General Secretariat and is reported elsewhere.

2 Nurturing the Fellowship of Churches and Communicating the Fellowship

The WCC makes a difference when it both engages the churches and extends hospitality to non-member churches. Challenges identified include the need for clarity of language and recognition that we may not mean the same things when we use common terms such as ‘fellowship’ and ‘unity.’

The Committee **encourages** the WCC to be more intentional in encouraging member churches to share reports and stories in all its programmes. More involvement of Central Committee and Commission/Advisory Group members in WCC events would be

helpful. WCC staff are encouraged to invite Central Committee members to represent the WCC in various fora and to report back. Strategies are needed to encourage visits and engage church leaders and ecumenical officers so as to encourage their input and involvement. Following the positive experience at the Central Committee meeting in Potsdam in February 2001, the Public Information team is asked to explore the possibility of organizing further training workshops on communication for Central Committee members, advisory-consultative groups and WCC staff on communication techniques about WCC work. The Committee welcomed the development of electronic forms of communication, specifically www.ecuspace.net.

3 Ecumenical Institute of Bossey

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the development of a Master's Degree programme and launching a Ph.D. programme, and the major renovation undertaken to Bossey's physical facilities. The Committee was encouraged by the establishment of the Bossey Liaison Group which links WCC and Bossey staff and by the evidence that it is functioning well. Bossey's increased networking with ecumenical institutions throughout the world was highlighted. Challenges facing Bossey include its emphasis on interfaith encounter and the development of ecumenical spirituality as integral elements in the task of ecumenical formation. The Committee **affirms** both these initiatives.

4 Dialogue with Neighbours of Other Religions

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the Guidelines on Inter-Religious Dialogue. Challenges are to ensure that the guidelines are used by publishing and distributing them

widely. These guidelines **are commended** to the many groups involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue at this crucial time.

5 Ecumenical Focus on Africa

The Programme Committee **affirms** the importance of the Ecumenical Focus on Africa acting in collaboration with International Affairs and the Decade to Overcome Violence to hold up issues around the on-going conflict in Sudan, which is the 2003 focus of the DOV. The Programme Committee **requests** that extra efforts be undertaken in collaboration with the communications teams and the regional desk working in particular on Sudan to highlight the role of the churches for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation.

6 Decade to Overcome Violence

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the establishment of a regional and thematic focus each year. In particular, the Programme Committee **noted** that the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), which had been initiated as part of the 2002 DOV focus, serves as a useful model because it shows the continuity of programmes launched in the context of the DOV. It would be useful to collect the stories and draw lessons from each focus. A collection of the lessons learned over the 10 years would be a useful resource for the churches.

The DOV focus is a space for liturgical and intercessory accompaniment, highlighting forgotten or ignored suffering and struggle, and at the same time celebrating hope and affirming peace building action. This year, 2003, the focus is on Sudan, with the

theme Healing and Reconciliation. Aside from the theme being addressed by various denominational and ecumenical gatherings, the focus helps churches express solidarity in various ways; it increases awareness among churches world-wide and gives those in the regions concerned a sense of being accompanied in prayer and action.

To allow planning and preparation with churches in the regions concerned and based on the Reference Group's recommendation and on the above considerations, Programme Committee **recommends** to the Central Committee, that the geographical foci for the three years 2004 - 2006 be affirmed as follows:

- 2004 USA
- 2005 Asia
- 2006 Latin America

7 Unity of the Church

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the work done in preparing the EDAN statement on persons with disabilities and in finding ways to assist the churches to discuss together issues that can be difficult to talk about such as matters of human sexuality and of ethnic identity. It was noted with pleasure that much of the work of this programme is done in collaboration with other programmes.

Challenges include finding ways to perpetuate the discussion at national, regional and confessional levels and in being accountable to one another in the on-going reflection.

The Programme Committee **appreciated receiving** an update on the plans for the forthcoming Faith and Order Plenary Commission

meeting in Kuala Lumpur from 28 July - 6 August 2004. It was recognized that the theme "Receive one another as Christ has received you to the glory of God" (Rom 15:7) provides a framework for substantial discussions on ecclesiology, baptism and studies in ethnic identity, and complements the theme of the forthcoming World Mission Conference. The Programme Committee **noted with pleasure** the plans to hold a Younger Theologians Consultation in parallel with the Plenary Commission.

The Programme Committee **welcomed** both the reflection on the work of the Special Commission and the work being done in preparation for a statement to go to the WCC 9th Assembly on "the church as local and universal, one and diverse."

8 Ecumenical Advocacy and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the WCC's public statements which have influenced the international policy debate. These statements are effective because they use local stories from the constituency. The challenge is how churches can make a difference in public policy by speaking together clearly and consistently. The Programme Committee **is pleased** that a UN staff representative will be named and **affirms** the importance of integrating work at the United Nations with other work of the Council.

The Programme Committee heard the report from the extended officers meeting of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs which advises WCC governing bodies on the public issues agenda. The Programme Committee was supportive of all the proposals and **asks the Public Issues Committee** to take note of the following comments:

- With relation to the report to be presented to the next WCC Assembly on “The protection of endangered populations in situations of armed violence: toward an ecumenical ethical approach,” that this report be prepared within the framework of the DOV and in consultation with the DOV Reference Group.
- To consider including the issues of Sudan, given it is the current focus of the DOV, and likewise Rwanda, given the current elections and the exhibition in the foyer of the Ecumenical Centre, in its report.

9 Mission and Evangelism: Promoting the Ministry of Reconciliation

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the way the theme for the next World Mission and Evangelism Conference was being picked up and explored by member churches, affiliated bodies and interested parties, and the broad range of participants in the conference preparations.

Challenges include ensuring that the missiological focus of reconciliation and healing remains central, the publication of IRM has an important role to play in this; ensuring that evangelism activities are not lost, and continuing to enable member churches to engage with one another around the issue of proselytism.

The Programme Committee **appreciated** being updated on the plans for the forth-coming Conference on World Mission and Evangelism now confirmed to be held in Athens, Greece, 12-19 May 2005 inclusive, at the invitation of the Church of Greece and in cooperation with the Evangelical Church of Greece and other member churches of the WCC, together with the Roman Catholic

Church in Greece who will all serve on the Local Arrangements Committee. It was **noted** that the slogan “Come Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile” which is complementary to the thematic focus previously reported, picks up the concerns of last year’s Central Committee to have a pneumatological emphasis. Letters giving full information and inviting the nomination of delegates to the conference have gone to all member churches and affiliated bodies. The on-going work of preparation for the conference will draw on the specific fund balances for the conference.

The Programme Committee **noted** that the Commission had given careful consideration to the request from the Central Committee 2002 to invite persons of other faith communities to the Conference. The committee **welcomed** the decision to invite a limited number of people of other faiths, who are already engaged in acts of healing and reconciliation together with Christians.

The Programme Committee **was pleased** to learn that the Reformed Ecumenical Council had been received as a body in consultative relationship with the Conference as is allowed by the By-laws.

10 The Challenge of Ecumenical Formation

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included interfaith learning, the important work of Oikosnet, and the use of regional consultants for ecumenical theological education. Challenges faced include offering opportunities for educational formation to church leaders and agencies, providing resources to local congregations to help them become ecumenically-minded. The Committee **highlighted** the specific contributions and needs of women in theological education, particularly as it relates to being church.

11 The Ethics of Life and Alternatives to Globalization

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included: the ecumenical formation of youth, the important work carried out by the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network, work on alternatives to globalization, encounters with the IMF and World Bank, and discussions with churches in the regions on the impact of globalization.

The Committee **affirms** new working methods of de-centralization being used by the JPC team, such as that being carried out through the programme on indigenous people, DOV overcoming violence against women, ecological debt and EDAN. The Committee **acknowledges** the key challenge of maintaining necessary linkages with the de-centralized programmes and the need to ensure their ongoing visibility in the work of the Council.

12 Diakonia and Solidarity

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included capacity-building and management initiatives carried out in the regions, and the work with children. The Committee noted that while the ongoing work is good and important, there is a need to be alert to the changing context in order to develop new initiatives and deepen the analyses as a basis for our work.

The Committee **affirms the possibilities** offered by relocation of some of the regional desks. At the same time, it is recognized that the process has been a painful one, particularly in the Pacific. The Programme Committee **requests** that attention be devoted to:

- Working with the churches in the regions to ensure that they feel a sense of ownership of the regional offices.
- Ensuring that the visibility of the regions in the life of the WCC is maintained.
- Monitoring the functioning of the regional offices and conducting careful reviews of these offices after an appropriate period.

13 Telling the Ecumenical Story

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the Ecumenical Research Centre, which also stands as an example of further cooperation between the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva and Bossey, in making effective use of the archives and libraries. The Committee affirms the provision of materials to churches in Brazil for use at the congregational level in preparing for the Assembly. The pressure of diminishing financial resources at a time when more communication, not less, is needed remains an on-going challenge.

International Ecumenical Initiatives

14 Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

As noted in the brief report (above, 3.6) on the Decade to Overcome Violence, the EAPPI played an important role in the DOV's 2002 focus: "End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East" and continues to serve an important role.

The Programme Committee **suggests** that EAPPI serve as a model for structuring and implementing future programmatic work within the foci of the DOV and other WCC ministries.

15 Ecumenical Initiative for HIV/AIDS in Africa

Work highlighted for the difference it had made included the practice of ensuring that people living with HIV/AIDS are present to share their testimonies when programmes and policies are discussed, and the development of curricula concerning HIV/AIDS with theological schools. The challenge is to be seen as being churches working together as awareness builds and capacity is built. Drug availability and costs is another major issue. As curricula are being developed, HIV/AIDS should not be separated from the broader context of human sexuality. The Committee **noted** that the issue of HIV/AIDS affects people on every continent although the ecumenical initiative focuses on Africa.

Fr George, in continuation, stated that the Programme Committee had examined proposals on the need to establish two new commissions in light of the internal structural changes of the Council, and on behalf of the Programme Committee presented recommendations for later decision by the Central Committee:

1. That the decision made by the Central Committee in 1999 to establish advisory groups on Regional Relations and Ecumenical Sharing, Justice, Peace and Creation, Youth and Women after the Eighth Assembly be rescinded in light of the internal structural changes which have taken place.
2. That two new commissions be established - the Commission of the Churches on Diakonia and Development, and the Commission on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.
3. That the composition of these two new commissions be reviewed by the Staffing and Nominations Sub-Committee of the Executive

Committee and membership in the commissions be presented to the Central Committee for approval.

Regarding Finance, they had been pleased to note the significant increase in the number of member churches making contributions for the year 2002, but had recognized that there was no room for complacency and that we had yet to reach the target set by the Harare Assembly of membership contributions reaching CHF10m by the next Assembly.

Concerning ways of working, the Committee were making three requests:

1. Given the length of time between meetings of commissions and advisory bodies, there was a need to review how they were able to work between actual meetings. They were asking that such a review be included in commissions' and advisory bodies' pre-Assembly evaluation process.
2. It was difficult for the Programme Committee to exercise its mandate to oversee the whole of the Council's programmatic work if, independently of it, other committees gave additional programmatic work to WCC teams. This increased pressure on limited staff and financial resources. It was the expectation of the Programme Committee that in this and in future Central Committee meetings the Finance and Policy Reference Committees would give early notice of matters having programmatic implications to the Programme Committee.
3. The Programme Committee had noted that one of the consequences of financial difficulties was the likelihood of more WCC meetings being held in the North. This might have adverse consequences for churches in the South that had not paid membership contributions and so were not eligible for subsidies for

attendance at meetings. The Programme Committee accepted the importance of the subsidy policy and asked that statistics be provided on the consequences of the application of this policy on regional balances.

He formally presented the report of the Programme Committee to the Central Committee.

After discussion at their tables, committee members engaged in general discussion of the report.

Ms Donnalie Edwards-Cabey was grateful for the report, but wished more had been said on 'Ecumenical Advocacy and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts', including the impunity issue. Concerning the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, she agreed that EAPPI had served as a good model, but asked if we could not affirm its work.

Revd Fr Vsevolod Chaplin also felt it important to affirm EAPPI's work.

Dean Anders Gadegaard wondered if it would be possible to spell out the relationship between activities and the main priorities set up by the Programme Committee, and if measurable aims and targets could be identified.

Mr John Doom expressed his concern that the churches of the Pacific had not been consulted prior to the relocation of the WCC's regional Pacific Desk. They felt that they no longer had a physical presence in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. He pleaded for an open frank review of the relocation process, and was glad that there would be a review of the relocation after one year. He was grateful

for the WCC delegation that had come to speak with the Pacific churches and was able to report that the Pacific Regional Desk was working well after three months.

Dr Agnes Abuom believed that the relocation of regional desks might present an opportunity to discover new ways of working between the regions and Geneva. Maintaining contact with Geneva was important. Ongoing rigorous review was needed (not only after one year), particularly where a region did not have a staff member for the region in Geneva. She agreed with the Programme Committee that they should be informed of the programmatic implications of work being proposed by the Finance and Policy Reference Committees.

Revd Heike Bosien, concerning the proposed annual foci for the Decade to Overcome Violence, 2004-2006, asked why the proposed focus for 2004 was a single country (the USA), while for the following two years it was a whole region (2005 - Asia; 2006 - Latin America).

Revd Dr Clifton Kirkpatrick praised the Younger Theologians' Consultation organized by Faith and Order, but was concerned that youth had not been mentioned in relation to the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. He urged CWME to seek resources for a young missiologists' consultation to be held in relation to the World Mission Conference.

Revd Dr Natan Setiabudi was grateful for the examples given of where the WCC was making a difference, but thought it should also be mentioned that the WCC is making a difference in Africa.

Bishop Federico Pagura spoke on relocation of regional offices, with specific reference to Latin America. If relocation of the Latin American Desk were to be proposed, prior consultation with churches in the region would be essential, so as to avoid a wrong step.

HE Archbishop Nifon of Targoviste felt that the Activities Report was very comprehensive, with one exception. There was no mention of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation.

HE Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus further pleaded for the work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation to be included in the comments on the Activities Report, possibly with reference to the new internal organization.

Revd Erica Mathieson commended the staff for achieving so much with so little.

Mr Thomas Getman said that our appreciation also included members of advisory groups. His own agency, World Vision International, appreciated being involved in the ecumenical movement, and was more progressive because of it.

Bishop Melvin Talbert asked what it would mean for the USA to be the annual DOV focus for 2004.

HB Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania detected a spirit of hope in the Activities Report, which was a cause for gratitude. He thanked the Programme Committee, but also the staff for making it happen. Concerning the DOV annual focus, he asked when it would be Europe. Concerning Bossey, he was pleased at the development of the Master of Ecumenical Studies programme,

which contrasted with the decreasing interest in ecumenism in theological faculties.

Bishop Godfrey Mhogolo asked where decisions about relocations of regional desks were taken. This had been a new departure.

Dr Raiser, responding, stated that before REOs were founded the WCC already had powerful regional desks in Geneva. We had been inheritors of that tradition, but the situation had now changed. It was one part of the reconfiguration process, and, if the main focus of an activity was in a region, it should be located in that region. It was not a new departure: EDAN, Climate Change, Indigenous Peoples and Theological Education were all examples of work outside Geneva. Further information on relocation of regional desks could be found in Appendix III of the February 2003 Executive Committee Minutes.

Fr George, responding, was thankful for the warm response to the report, and comments and suggestions had been duly noted.

Concerning the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation, he indicated that the Special Commission was not a programme. Indeed, it was so important that it made its own report.

Concerning the Decade to Overcome Violence, preliminary discussions had already taken place with the USA DOV Board on implementation if the USA was designated the focus for 2004. The yearly focus was on an individual country or region as appropriate. The 2006 focus on Latin America was being proposed because of the Assembly in Brazil that year. Europe might be the focus for 2007.

Ms Bottoms, also responding, described where the Committee had reached in its work. In the present report they were commenting on reports on past work. In their future meetings they would be looking forward to future work. She distinguished between programmes and activities: there were now 13 core programmes, all related to the WCC's core mandate, and two international ecumenical initiatives; and within each programme there were activities.

Among the core programmes:

- One programme is related to the core function of the General Secretariat to strengthen the fellowship of churches.
- Another is for the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey.
- Three are related to the overall and cross teams' concerns: DOV, Inter-religious dialogue and Ecumenical focus on Africa.
- Six express the priority objectives in the present context of the Council's historical mandate:
 - Unity
 - Advocacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts
 - Mission and evangelism
 - Ecumenical formation
 - Ethics of life and alternatives to globalisation
 - Diakonia and solidarity
- Two are related to communicating WCC's work.

The international ecumenical initiatives were:

- the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)
- the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS initiative in Africa

Concerning measurable targets, she questioned whether such management tools could usefully be applied to such a wide range of programmes.

Concerning relocation of regional desks, she agreed that they should be kept under review as appropriate, and an analysis of the Pacific relocation after one year was essential.

Concerning a possible young missiologists' conference, she gave assurance that there would be a missiological consultation, with youth involvement, but possibly not immediately prior to the World Mission Conference. It was intended that there should be strong youth representation at the conference itself.

Concerning the Ecumenical Focus on Africa, she agreed that it was 'making a difference'.

Concerning the Special Commission, she reiterated that it was not a programme, but rather an ethos or mode of functioning.

Concerning Bossey, she noted with pleasure that the Bossey Board was distributing its academic programme to theological faculties.

Fr George placed the Programme Committee's recommendations before the Central Committee.

The Central Committee **agreed** that the geographical foci for the Decade to Overcome Violence be 2004 - USA; 2005 - Africa; and 2006 - Latin America.

Revd Norman Shanks, commenting on the proposal for two new commissions, asked why we needed two further commissions in

addition to the existing standing commissions of CWME and Faith and Order. Did a programme need a commission to give it credibility? He also enquired how often they would meet between the present and the Assembly.

Dr Raiser explained that these commissions would give the advice and guidance necessary; they would each meet twice.

The Central Committee **agreed**, with two abstentions, that the decision made by the Central Committee in 1999 to establish advisory groups on Regional Relations and Ecumenical Sharing, Justice, Peace and Creation, Youth and Women after the eighth Assembly be rescinded in light of the internal structural changes which had taken place.

The Central Committee **agreed**, with two against and two abstentions, that two new commissions be established - the Commission of the Churches on Diakonia and Development and the Commission on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

The Central Committee **agreed** that the composition of these two commissions be reviewed by the Staffing and Nominations Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee and membership in the commissions be presented to the Central Committee for approval.

Dean Anders Gadegaard asked how these proposals for members of these new commissions would come to the Central Committee. Dr Raiser responded that the Executive Committee, which acts as a nominations committee for the Central Committee, had authorized the officers to complete the nominations process.

Revd Dr Tyrone Pitts congratulated the Programme Committee on its work. He applauded the designation of the USA as the DOV geographical focus for 2004. It would help many movements to come together.

The Central Committee unanimously **accepted** the First Report of the Programme Committee.

6.2 Second Report of the Programme Committee

Revd Fr Dr Kondothra George, assisted by Revd Ruth Bottoms, presented the Second Report of the Programme Committee.

The present report dealt with points three and four of the Committee's mandate (see First Report).

6.2.1 Programmatic Work and the Special Commission

The Programme Committee **noted** that one of the concerns expressed in the plenary discussion of the First Report of the Programme Committee concerned the way in which the report of the Special Commission impacts programmatic work. The report of the Special Commission and the reports of the Steering Committee are not in themselves programmatic work, but rather inform the whole ethos of the way in which the WCC works. The Programme Committee again **affirms** that the work of the Special Commission and its recommendations need to be implemented and therefore need to be borne in mind by all staff teams and consultative bodies as they engage in programmatic work.

6.2.2 Relocation of Regional Desks

This issue of the relocation of the regional desks was referred back from the First Report of the Programme Committee for further consideration. The Committee had before it the minutes of the February 2003 Executive Committee (section 13.3 of the report and Appendix III) and the document “Update on the Decentralization and Relocation Process.” The Committee **recognizes** that the processes of the relocation of the Pacific and Middle East desks have been painful and difficult. The Committee also **notes** that relocation of regional desks is different than decentralization of programmatic work. In learning from these experiences, the Committee **makes the following recommendations:**

- a. The relocation of these two regional desks should be reviewed. As part of this, the Pacific churches are invited to offer their reflections on the relocation after a year. These reflections are to be presented to the WCC Executive Committee in August 2004 and will help form the basis for a fuller review of the Pacific desk relocation. A similar process may be used in the case of the Middle East at an appropriate time.
- b. These reviews need to consider the impact of relocation on the work of the desk, on relations with churches in the region, financial consequences, travel time, and the impact on the WCC-Geneva, including the way in which visitors to Geneva from the region are welcomed and accompanied.
- c. Any further relocation of regional desks should be guided by these reviews and by a commitment to treating all regions in a fair and equitable manner in order to strengthen and nurture relationships with the churches in the region.
- d. Whenever relocation is considered, there must be careful consultation with churches in the region before decisions are taken.

Discussion

Mr John Doom expressed his satisfaction that the Pacific churches would be invited to offer their reflections on relocation after one year, and that care would be taken in welcoming and accompanying visitors to Geneva. He felt that a commitment to treat all regions in a fair and equitable way was important.

Bishop Anba Youannes enquired whether it had actually been decided to relocate the Middle East desk to the region. The General Secretary replied that the decision to relocate the Middle East desk had been taken by the Executive Committee and plans were in hand to relocate it to Cyprus. The review process would equally apply to the Middle East relocation.

The Central Committee unanimously **approved** these recommendations on relocation of regional desks.

6.2.3 Relating to Policy Reference Committees

The Programme Committee **considered** the programmatic implications from the Moderator's Report, the General Secretary's Report and the plenary presentations on "Caring for Life" and **forwarded** their comments to the relevant Policy Reference Committees for their consideration in making more detailed responses to these presentations.

The Programme Committee **was pleased** to receive information from Policy Reference Committees I and II which have an impact on programme work and note was duly taken of their recommendations in the section below. At the same time, there continues to be a challenge as to how the Programme Committee can entirely fulfil its

mandate given the constraints of meeting times during Central Committee.

6.2.4 Programme and Activity Plans 2003-2005

The Programme Committee **reviewed** the updated Blue Book “Working Together – Making a difference.” This document outlines the proposed programmes and activities presented by staff and was discussed at the WCC Round Table in April 2003.

The Programme Committee heard that staff and the Executive Committee were recommending that the first two programmes listed in the updated Blue Book, namely “Strengthening the One Ecumenical Movement” and “Nurturing the Fellowship of Churches”, be merged together into a single core programme: “Strengthening the one Ecumenical Movement”. The Programme Committee endorsed this and thus **recommends** to the Central Committee that the programme work of the WCC consist of 13 programmes, plus involvement in the two International Ecumenical Initiatives.

The Central Committee unanimously **approved** this recommendation on the programme work of the WCC.

The Programme Committee gave the following policy guidelines to each programme:

6.2.5 Strengthening the One Ecumenical Movement

The Programme Committee **affirms** the platform of ecumenical officers as an important network for strengthening relations with member churches. The Committee **recommends** the establishment

of an informal group as a “think tank” to provide creative guidelines and counsel to the task of the office of the Church and Ecumenical Relations as it looks to the future. In each case, the Committee encourages balanced representation from the regions.

Discussion

Very Revd Benedictos Ioannou expressed his dissatisfaction at matters such as the 'think tank' appearing in the report that had not been discussed or approved by the Programme Committee, of which he was a member. The General Secretary explained that because of time constraints at this meeting there had been no time for a final plenary meeting of the Programme Committee. He appealed for understanding that the drafters had acted in good faith.

Dean Anders Gadegaard expanded the Committee's thinking on the 'think tank'. Ecumenical Relations was now located in the General Secretariat and this informal 'think tank' would act as a more flexible successor to the former advisory group. It would be monitored by the Executive Committee.

Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson added his support to the establishment of the 'think tank'. It would help the limited numbers of staff to remain in touch with the constituency.

The Central Committee approved, with six abstentions, this recommendation to establish an informal group as a 'think tank'.

The Committee **affirms** the importance of the widening and deepening of the fellowship, but also recognizes that there is sometimes tension between these two objectives. There is also sometimes tension between both of these objectives and the

programme work of the WCC. Therefore, the Committee **requests** that programme work be undertaken in close coordination with the office of Church and Ecumenical Relations.

The Committee **affirms** the priority of coherence of the ecumenical movement in light of the ongoing discussion of the reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement.

The mandate of the office of Church and Ecumenical Relations expands beyond its activities. Strengthening, deepening and widening the ecumenical movement is the task of the whole Council. For the sake of ensuring the coherence of the ecumenical movement both within the WCC and through its constituency, the Programme Committee **recommends** that the Central Committee request the Staff Leadership Group to find the appropriate in-house mechanism that will help the office of Church and Ecumenical Relations monitor these relationships as they are carried out by various staff in the activities and programmes of the WCC.

The Central Committee **approved**, with one abstention, this recommendation to request the Staff Leadership Group accordingly.

6.2.6 Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

The Programme Committee **affirms** the work of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey and **encourages** Bossey to continue its negotiation with the University of Geneva concerning the recognition of non-state universities with academic excellence around the world.

6.2.7 Dialogue with Neighbours of other Religions

The Committee **affirms** the importance of the programme of Dialogue with Neighbours of other Religions. The Committee **asks** the staff to give priority to developing the theological understanding and theological motivation for interfaith dialogue, including through theological seminaries and institutes. Priority should be given to work within inter-faith dialogue which seeks to overcome violence, to promote peace and to enable religious communities on the ground to work together to prevent and resolve conflicts. The programme should work collaboratively in the regions in order to support and accompany local initiatives at inter-faith dialogue.

6.2.8 Ecumenical Focus on Africa

The Committee **affirms** the continuing importance of the Ecumenical Focus on Africa programme and its four programme activities. These four activities provide a useful framework under which additional issues could be added, such as corruption and the arms trade. The Committee **recognizes** the difficulties of assessing the impact of this programme, given its broad focus and **suggests** that EFA needs greater visibility. The programme staff are **requested** to consider ways of increasing communication about the programme's work with media, donors, member churches and other constituencies. The Committee suggests that the effectiveness of the programme could be increased through a multi-level approach, including the activities of local churches, the broader ecumenical family, and governments.

6.2.9 Decade to Overcome Violence

The Committee **expresses appreciation** for the fact that the Decade to Overcome Violence programme has become central to the life of the World Council of Churches and is integrated into the plans of most of the 13 core programmes. Moreover, the Committee **is encouraged** by the many activities being undertaken around the world within the DOV framework. The Committee **reaffirms** that DOV as a programme works as a coordinating mechanism and that the description in the updated "Blue Book" does not represent the full range of the work being carried out by DOV. The Committee **suggests** that to be more effective, further work is needed on engaging structures such as the economy and state power and on exploring the issue of the use and misuse of power. Further efforts should be made to engage the regional ecumenical organizations in the Decade to Overcome Violence. The Living Letters methodology, pioneered by the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, is particularly commended.

6.2.10 Unity of the Church

The Programme Committee **affirms** the decision of the Standing Commission that priority among programme plans be placed on those activities - ecclesiology; baptism; ethnic identity, national identity and the search for unity; the statement for the Ninth Assembly on the "Church Local and Universal, One and Diverse" - that will reach maturity for the 2006 WCC Assembly and will be presented for particular discussion at the Faith and Order Plenary Commission (2004). The Committee also **welcomes** the fact that the Study on Baptism will produce both a report and a volume of baptismal liturgies. The Committee **commends** the incorporation of

theological reflection on peace by the programme as a contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence.

6.2.11 Ecumenical Advocacy and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

The Committee **appreciates** the way in which this programme is responding to regional and thematic issues related to conflict and overcoming conflict. This programme intentionally and continually asks the regions, especially in situations of conflicts, what are local churches asking for, how is the WCC needed, and how can the WCC advocate for and with them.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the new emphases, in particular thematic foci such as impunity, human rights, and disarmament.

In order to have a wider impact with both member churches and those that the WCC seeks to influence (governments, United Nations, etc.), the Programme Committee **asks** the programme staff to be more intentional about acting *with* churches rather than acting *on behalf of* churches. Good examples of where this has functioned well are EAPPI and the process around the statement of Church Leaders United against the War.

The Committee notes that because of diminished staff capacity, it is not possible to carry forward all previous priorities. Thus the Committee **asks** the staff and the CCIA to implement a process of prioritization. By having clear priorities, the Council will ensure that when it speaks, its voice is strong, well-informed and offers the ethical and theological reflections that only the church can offer. Within this context, the Committee **requests** that priority be placed

within the thematic foci on non-violent responses to conflicts and wars.

The Committee **suggests** that more ethical and theological reflection is needed on the on-going work in order to help the churches learn more about their particular role in promoting peace and human security.

6.2.12 Mission and Evangelism: Promoting the Ministry of Reconciliation

The Programme Committee **affirms** that the preparation of the CWME Conference in 2005 and its follow-up be the priority for the activities of the programme. The Committee **recognizes** that it is important that there be liaison with the Assembly Planning Committee in order to allow insights from the conference to be received and debated at the Assembly.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the suggestion by Central Committee to hold a younger missiologists' consultation in relation to the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, and that this should be carried out from the existing Conference budget and additional resources made available by churches for this initiative.

6.2.13 The Challenge of Ecumenical Formation

Recognizing that ecumenical formation is distinct from interfaith learning, the Programme Committee **affirms** that both of these activities are important and are clearly related.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the ecumenical theological efforts being carried out in Central/Eastern Europe, the work of the

three regional consultants, and the plan of action for the “Journey of Hope in Africa Continued.”

The Committee **expresses a wish** for more resources for scholarships for theological education as the majority of resources come designated for development education. The Committee **noted** that almost 50% of the budget for Ecumenical Formation is designated for scholarships and is just passed through.

The Committee **encourages** staff to emphasize awareness-building on disabilities at the annual meeting on Ecumenical Theological Education.

The Committee **asks** that the programme accompany ecumenical formation within the churches in Brazil in preparation for the Assembly.

6.2.14 The Ethics of Life and Alternatives to Globalization

The Programme Committee notes the complexity of issues included in this programme and **affirms** the programme plans related to: economic globalization; overcoming racism; ecumenical leadership of youth; overcoming violence against women and children; the ethics of life and eco-justice; Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN); and women’s visions of the church. The Committee notes the change in name from the updated “Blue Book” from “Overcoming Violence against Women” to “Overcoming Violence against Women and Children”.

The Programme Committee **asks** the Indigenous People’s programme to work with the International Affairs, Peace and Human Security team to develop a statement for the 2005 Central

Committee on the loss of indigenous languages. This statement should include theological reflection and a challenge to churches to play a central role in preserving the world's languages. The statement should further encourage churches to partner with bible societies and other organizations working to preserve oral traditions.

Both the presentations on disabilities at the plenary of the Central Committee and references made by the General Secretary in his report emphasized that the experiences and gifts of people with disabilities are integral to the reality of the whole church. In light of this, the Programme Committee **recognizes** that the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN) was one of the programmes that was deeply impacted by major cuts in budget as of 2003. The Programme Committee **reaffirms** that EDAN is an important commitment of the WCC situated within the JPC Team. Therefore, the Programme Committee **encourages** Central Committee members to challenge their churches to fund this as a special project, with additional designated funding.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the work done on youth and encourages staff to strengthen the ecumenical formation of youth on the lines proposed by Policy Reference II. The Programme Committee **encourages** the intentional sharing of participants' lists of those who are involved in consultations for young theologians and young missiologists, stewards programmes and Bossey students in order to facilitate further participation by these young people in the life and work of the WCC. The Committee also **lifts up** the proposal from Policy Reference Committee II to strengthen the work on youth and economic justice and youth participation at the World Social Forum, particularly leading up to the Ninth Assembly.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the importance and urgency of challenges posed by new trends in genetic engineering and encourages staff to develop this work along the lines proposed by Policy Reference Committee II, drawing on the existing work within churches.

6.2.15 Diakonia and Solidarity

The Committee **affirms** that the Diakonia and Solidarity programme is expressing a genuine commitment to respond to the question raised at Harare: « how do we offer together our resources, witness and action for the sake of the world's very future? » (Harare Report 1998, p. 149).

The Committee **affirms the directions of work** on the Diakonia and Solidarity programme, and the importance of the four core activities, with the following comments :

- Regional desks, especially in the relocated offices, need to work in close cooperation with the regional ecumenical organizations.
- WCC's regional desks play important roles at the global level, but also in convening meetings and mediating between partners at the national and regional levels when there are difficulties.

The Committee **notes** the change in name of the activity « Creating Spaces for Analysis and Reflection », in the updated "Blue Book" to « Creating Spaces for Analysis and Common Action ».

The Committee **affirms** the team's use of new ways of working. In particular, the use of ecumenical enablers in the regions not only allows staff to carry out a broader range of activities, but also gives churches the opportunity to strengthen their relationships with each other.

6.2.16 Communicating the Fellowship

The Programme Committee **affirms** the critical role communication plays in increasing the visibility, engagement and funding for the WCC and its work. Such communication should be supported and carried out across the Council. The Programme Committee **suggests** that, in light of reduced resources and the critical need for professional communication in today's world, the task of interpretation of the programmatic work with specific targeted groups needs to be addressed by both the Public Information and the other programme teams of the WCC. Each programme team should be responsible for allocating resources and creating a pro-active plan for communicating its work in coordination with the Public Information team.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the efforts to improve staff communication skills and to encourage better coordination in this regard.

6.2.17 Telling the Ecumenical Story

The Programme Committee **recognizes** that an important way of sharing the ecumenical story is through reception, accompaniment and hospitality offered to ecumenical visitors. The Staff Leadership Group is encouraged to ensure that these opportunities are maximized.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the on-going negotiations for co-publishing in other nations and languages. The Programme Committee **encourages** members of the Central Committee to assist the staff of Publications and Research concerning possible co-publishing opportunities.

Noting the decline in the budget for Language Services, the Programme Committee **highlights** the importance of adequate provision for translation and interpretation in the 2006 Assembly, including into Portuguese.

6.2.18 International Ecumenical Initiatives **(Time-limited programmes with specific funding based on tripartite collaboration)**

6.2.18.1 Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

The Programme Committee **commends** the EAPPI as a good example of collaboration, acting with churches in a region and the region's council of churches and encourages the continuation of this. The Committee **acknowledges** the risk that EAPPI participants are taking in this situation of conflict. The Committee also **encourages** the EAPPI to measure its impact through visibility and communication as well as through its work in conflict-resolution. As this is a time-specific initiative, staff are encouraged to continually evaluate the WCC's involvement in this programme.

6.2.18.2 Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa

Noting the number of consultants employed by this programme and the report prepared for the Executive Committee on de-centralized capacities, the Programme Committee **encourages** the development of guidelines or memoranda of understanding between the consultants, the WCC and the hosting organizations. Care must be taken that these consultants are able to be consistent in presenting issues relating to wider WCC policies and programmes.

Discussion

Revd Norman Shanks felt that the Programme Committee and the Central Committee itself were engaging well with programmes and prioritizing of issues. He assured the Central Committee that all relevant points were being noted by the Assembly Planning Committee.

Revd Arne Fritzson spoke of the financial needs of the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN). They did not have the financial resources to make the programme really effective. He drew attention to the possibility of its being funded as a special project with additional designated funding.

6.2.19 Financial Matters

The Programme Committee **received** members of the Finance Committee who presented information concerning the proposed programme budget for 2004. The Programme Committee was pleased to learn that the 2003 budget outcomes looked to be realistic.

The Programme Committee **noted** that although the financial crisis of last year had been addressed, regrettably with the loss of staff, the financial position of the WCC still needs further stabilization.

The Programme Committee **expresses the hope** that stability will soon be achieved and that the programmatic work of the Council can be advocated positively out of its own integrity rather than out of financial stringency.

The Committee was reminded that the projected budget for 2004 as given previously was only provisional. Likewise the figures in the updated "Blue Book" had been a working tool for the round table meeting with funding partners in April 2003.

The Programme Committee **affirmed** the policy of the Finance Committee that expenditure should be in accordance with income and that the WCC should not engage in deficit budgeting and further agreed to work within the projected budget of CHF 39 million.

The Programme Committee **expresses the need** for the specific programme and activity budget lines to retain some flexibility with regard to the use of programme reserve balances, recognizing that programme fund balances are to be used, and that the resultant expenses are included in the approved budget.

The Programme Committee **welcomes the initiatives** being taken by the Finance Committee in respect to income generation and encourages them to continue to make this a priority. At the same time the Programme Committee expresses the hope that all Central Committee members will do their utmost in their own churches and regions to respond positively to income requests.

The Programme Committee **requests** the Staff Leadership Group to continue to monitor programme and activity expenditure using the following guidelines:

- The 13 core programmes remain.
- Those activities that are specifically focused toward the 2006 Assembly be a priority.
- Different approaches to the funding of different programmes may be appropriate.

- The on-going process of evaluation which was previously established should continue to be used in determining the viability of programmes.
- The work-load expectations upon staff need to be reasonable and viable.

6.2.20 Evaluation of Consultative Bodies

In light of the previous request for each consultative body to undertake a process of review, the Programme Committee **sets** the following guidelines:

- Explore how far the mandate (e.g. Bylaws, Terms of Reference) is seen as appropriate and relevant and review the mandate in this light, particularly as it relates to the search for unity.
- Enquire how far the consultative body has, in fact, been able to implement its mandate.
- Evaluate the size and composition of the consultative body.
- Ask what is the developing role of the officers of the consultative body in providing cohesion and guidance to the consultative body and staff on programme priorities and activities as they develop and are implemented.
- Consider the extent to which the members of consultative bodies report to and from their churches and the wider constituencies from which they come on the work, programme and activities of the consultative body.
- Determine what is the appropriate remit for the work of the consultative body, what for the specific staff team and what for other staff configurations (e.g. to what extent is the consultative body responsible for overseeing inter-team work?).

The Programme Committee **asks** that reports of these reviews be presented before its next meeting in February 2005.

6.2.21 Constituency Evaluation of Programmatic Work prior to Assembly 2006

The Programme Committee gave careful consideration to the constitutional requirement to provide for a review of programmatic work at the next Assembly “*to determine the overall policies of the World Council and to review programmes undertaken to implement policies previously adopted*” [Constitution V. 1 c) 4)].

This is something different from the on-going task of the Programme Committee to “*provide for and make recommendations for regular evaluation of programmes and activities*” [Rules VII 3. d)]. The criteria for this has previously been set by the Programme Committee, and all staff teams continually work within this evaluative framework.

The Programme Committee believes that as part of the review of programmatic work at the next Assembly, some evaluation on the part of the member churches and the broader constituency, building on the mid-term evaluation, needs to occur.

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide to the delegates a clear account of the work done by the Council since the Harare Assembly. The evaluation is also intended to strengthen each programme in its activities and to provide for greater coordination in the overall activities and programming of the WCC.

It is intended to:

- Consider the extent to which WCC programmes are used, owned and valued by the constituency.

- Evaluate the programmatic work done according to the priorities set by the last Assembly and the policy guidelines given by the Central Committee.
- Relate the work to the different and changing contexts in which it has been carried out.
- Consider the extent to which the Common Understanding and Vision (CUV) policy statement and the recommendations of the Special Commission have been incorporated into the programmatic work of the Council.
- Discern the emerging trends and challenges that should shape the future programme directions of the WCC.

The Programme Committee **recommends** the setting up of an External Evaluation team, and **requests** that the Staff Leadership Group find the appropriate mechanism for staff to provide the necessary information and liaison with this team.

The Programme Committee **asks** the General Secretary to set up the External Evaluation team and report to the officers in December 2003. Those invited to serve should have expertise in evaluation as well as knowledge of and commitment to the ecumenical movement. The team should consist of a maximum of five persons and, for continuity with the mid-term evaluation team, should include Dr. Marion Best and Ms Sylvia Raulo. The other representatives should include at least one person from the Orthodox tradition and at least two persons from the South.

The Programme Committee specifically **requests** that the evaluation team seek opinions about the perceived life-cycle of activities, that is their continuation, phasing out, or relocation of responsibility to another ecumenical body.

The Programme Committee **refers** the following documents to the External Evaluation Team to assist them in their work:

- “WCC Pre-Assembly Programme Evaluation Framework” with commentary and amendments from the Programme Committee.
- “Aide Memoire” which includes additional comments by the Programme Committee on the evaluation process.
- The summary document of evaluation criteria as previously established by the Programme Committee.
- The Report of the Special Commission.

The Programme Committee **affirms** the proposed timeline for the constituency evaluation as set out in the framework document (see above), **noting** however that, given the conference in May 2005, additional evaluation with regard to CWME should be submitted to the September 2005 Executive Committee.

The Programme Committee **suggests** that this constituency evaluation be budgeted for within the Assembly preparations.

The Central Committee unanimously **approved** this recommendation to set up an External Evaluation Team.

The Central Committee unanimously **accepted** with applause the Second Report of the Programme Committee.

7. REPORT OF THE CORE GROUP OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Dr Marion Best, presiding, invited the Revd Norman Shanks, Moderator of the Core Group of the Assembly Planning Committee to present their report.

Mr Shanks presented a written report, giving details of the first meeting of the Core Group at Bossey in February 2003 and later developments. Already there was a sense of exciting possibilities ahead for participants, the life of the churches and the whole ecumenical movement. He drew attention to the matters to be decided by this meeting of the Central Committee. The size and the theme of the Assembly would be discussed in Policy Reference Committee III, which would make recommendations. The budget, now in the region of CHF 6.5m, would be discussed by the Finance Committee, which would also make a recommendation. Other matters mentioned in the report were not for decision by the Central Committee, but members' comments would be helpful.

For the present session, he wished the Central Committee to have a general debate on a possible theme. The Core Group had identified four overlapping and interconnected strands in the suggestions made to them: a focus on God, a vision of new possibilities, a focus on humanity, and a focus on socio-economic realities. In the light of these, various possibilities for a theme were emerging. He invited comments on a possible theme, for consideration by Policy Reference Committee III.

Dr Best invited members to discuss at their tables for ten minutes, and then invited contributions from the floor. Many members made

suggestions, both for criteria and for actual themes. Some of the points made were:

- grace was an important basic concept, but had different connotations in different confessional traditions
- a theme should be clear and short, seven words maximum
- it should be applicable to the situation in Latin America
- it should interpret the Assembly in advance to the churches and the world.

Mr Shanks thanked the members for their suggestions, which would be considered in Policy Reference Committee III.

Dr Best thanked Mr Shanks and the Core Group for their report.

The General Secretary, on behalf of the Executive Committee, proposed that the full Assembly Planning Committee be made up as follows:

Revd Norman Shanks (moderator)

HE Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki

Revd Canon Dr Trond Bakkevig

Ms Selai Cati

Ms Lois Dauway

Ms Alice-Jean Finlay

Revd Ying Gao

Metropolitan Professor Dr Gennadios of Sassima

Bishop Dr Martin Hein

Mr Welly Esau Mandowen

Revd Dr Hector Mendez

Bishop Mdimi Godfrey Mhogolo

Ms Idah Njobvu

Bishop Serapion

(The names of Metropolitan Ambrosius, Ms Cati and Bishop Hein were additions to the Core Group.)

Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen pleaded for a representative of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) to be included in the Assembly Planning Committee. The General Secretary responded that, since the Assembly Planning Committee was a sub-committee of the Central Committee and since there was no CLAI representative on the Central Committee, that was not possible. But the point was well taken, and the local planning committee in Brazil would no doubt include CLAI representation. He felt that there must be close links with the Latin American churches and that would be via the local committee.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the proposed membership of the Assembly Planning Committee.

The General Secretary, on behalf of the Executive Committee, proposed a list of proposed members of the Assembly Worship Committee. This was a sub-committee of the Assembly Planning Committee, and there was no requirement that its members should be Central Committee members. These names had emerged from intensive discussion. People with musical, poetic and artistic talents were essential, and the group needed to be small for financial and dynamic reasons. The proposed members were:

1. Metr. Prof Dr Gennadios of Sassima, Eastern Orthodox, Turkey (Mod.)(M)
2. Rev Cybele Kuss, Lutheran, Brazil (Vice-Mod.) (F)
3. Mr Daniel Apii, Christian Church, Cook Islands (M)
4. Rev John Bell, Presbyterian, Scotland (M)
5. Rev Andrej Elisseyev, Eastern Orthodox, Russia (M)

6. Bishop Dr. Richard Aboagye Mensah, Methodist, Ghana (M)
7. Ms Imelda Simangunsong, Protestant, Indonesia (F)
8. Mrs. Rima Tarazi, Episcopalian, Palestine (F)
9. Bishop Youssef, Oriental Orthodox (Coptic Orthodox Church) USA (M)
10. To be appointed by the Officers (F)

The Central Committee asked for a revision of the proposed composition of the Assembly Worship Committee. It was felt that a closer look at the right balances (region, church affiliation, gender) would be necessary.

8. REPORT OF POLICY REFERENCE COMMITTEE I

Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson presented the first part of the Report and Most Revd Dr Rufus Ositelu the second part.

8.1 Introduction

The chair gave a brief overview of the present and future of the church as projected by those who study trends in church growth and development. I Corinthians 12:4-13 became the point of group reflection and devotion.

8.2 Expression of Appreciation and Thanksgiving

The members of Policy Reference Committee I expressed appreciation to the staff for their diligence and service, especially during the recent period of reconfiguring work loads and as we look forward to the preparations for the next assembly.

8.3 Report of the Moderator

The committee received the Report of the Moderator with appreciation. Comments from the committee were forwarded to Policy Reference Committee II.

8.4 Report of the General Secretary

The committee received with appreciation the Report of the General Secretary. Comments from the committee were forwarded to Policy Reference Committee II.

8.5 Report of the Officers

The committee received the Report of the Officers with appreciation. Comments from the committee were forwarded to Policy Reference Committee II.

8.6 Consultation on Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement

The report was introduced and discussion ensued. Comment was made to the effect that the success of the ecumenical movement has outgrown the organization that encouraged it during the last 55 years. Ecumenical organizations and groups have proliferated. The committee discussed the appointment process, the church connection, and the accountability and autonomy of persons invited to the consultation in Antelias in November 2003. Members also expressed interest in having a process that is creative and makes use of new people and new ideas. Comments from the committee were forwarded to Policy Reference Committee III.

8.7 Christian World Communions

The committee heard a summary and commentary on the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions and their deliberations. Discussion followed on the multiplicity of gatherings and initiatives from Central Committee 2002 (cf Minutes p. 80, Policy Reference Committee I, 13.6)

Recommendations:

- a) That the Executive Committee develop strategies for cooperation and coordination of future assemblies of WCC, WARC and LWF, following 2006, for the 2005 Central Committee Meeting.
- b) That member churches be strongly urged to raise with the respective governing bodies the possibility of cooperation and coordination at all levels of assemblies of WCC, LWF and WARC following 2006.

The Central Committee, with three abstentions, **voted in favour** of the above recommendations.

8.8 Relationship with Pentecostals

The committee heard reports on continuing discussions within the membership of the Joint Consultative Group. This body met in November of 2002 in Seoul, Korea, and again for its fourth meeting in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA, in May of 2003.

A committee member from Zimbabwe told of substantial developments in that country regarding cooperative work between the churches, including the Pentecostals. Others stories were also shared. The committee is encouraged by these reports.

8.9 Relations with the Roman Catholic Church

The committee heard a report on the work of the Joint Working Group.

The current foci of the Joint Working Group are the following:

1. Ecclesiological Implications of Baptism,
2. Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue,
3. National and Regional Councils of Churches and the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church. The committee commends the direction in which the JWG is working.

8.10 Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organization

The committee heard a progress report following the Pasadena Consultation of 15 – 20 June, 2002. The Forum is a process of bringing together for consultation and information, representatives of churches that have not previously gathered.

There is a need to expand the membership, particularly of people from the evangelical community. The vision is to hold in the future a gathering of this diverse cross-section of churches and ecumenical organisations. The interest and enthusiasm of the participants is clear; however, the financing is difficult. There also needs to be a commitment of the organized segments of the evangelical world that indicates their support and affirmation.

The committee sees the forum concept as extremely important and underlines the need for the Central Committee to give it priority.

8.11 Regional Ecumenical Organizations and National Councils of Churches

The consultation with regional and national ecumenical organizations is a way to consider the role and functions of the varying ecumenical bodies. It is also a way of working to lessen duplication of materials and programs.

There was some discussion on the connection between programme and relationships in the preparation of programmes designed for member churches. With whom, for example, should the contact be? The regional or national council or the churches in the area?

8.12 Assembly Theme

One view of the theme expressed suggested that it should be: modest and not commercial, have a confessing element, and be as inclusive as possible. Another concern expressed was the need that the theme have relevance; that is, it can be understood.

Several theme ideas were suggested and the committee forwarded those to Policy Reference Committee III.

8.13 Report of the Steering Committee of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC

Staff reported on the progress of this committee. The Report of the Special Commission is being well received among the Orthodox churches. Translations have been provided in Russian, Arabic and Greek, languages common to Orthodox people.

The following questions and observations were raised in committee discussion:

- Are steps being taken to ready the churches for the Ninth Assembly discussion on the Special Commission Report and the work of the Steering Committee?
- The work resulting from the Report of the Special Commission as carried out by the Steering Committee under the mandate of the Central Committee is a work in progress. Questions expressed cannot always be answered specifically.
- The debate/discussion on the report needs to take place in more of the churches of the World Council, with response to the Steering Committee in order to facilitate their work mandated by the Central Committee.

The Report of the Special Commission is aimed at strengthening the fellowship of the WCC. In light of this, several of its approved recommendations imply modifications to the Articles of the Constitution and the Rules of the WCC requiring decisions by the Ninth Assembly.

Recommendations (given here in the form in which they were adopted):

- a) In order that the content of the Special Commission's proposals and the reasons for the proposals will be clearly understood, the member churches of the WCC are urged to provide educational opportunities for their constituencies. These opportunities would be aimed at exploring the proposals, highlighting the spirit and purpose behind them and the way the implementation of the proposals can strengthen Orthodox participation in the Council and

enhance the fellowship of member churches within the WCC. In addition, it will contribute to ecumenical relations with non-member churches.

- b) It is recommended that wherever possible, these educational opportunities be such that member churches at the local level study the proposals together.
- c) It is recommended that the Assembly Planning Committee and member churches assist especially the delegates coming to the Ninth Assembly to be fully informed about the proposals of the Special Commission.

Discussion

HE Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus (Co-moderator of the Steering Committee) was saddened that problems being experienced within the Steering Committee were not adequately reflected in the report of Policy Reference Committee I. Something had to change in the character and style of the collaboration in the Steering Committee. Much work would have to be done before the Assembly so that a common mind in the Steering Committee could be presented to the Assembly.

Bishop Rolf Koppe (Co-moderator of the Steering Committee) had intended not to intervene at this point but he did think that the Steering Committee were working harmoniously together. Any differences would have to be resolved within the Steering Committee so that a common approach could be presented in their reporting.

HH Aram I stressed the need to create a trust-building fellowship within the Council, so that the Orthodox did not feel themselves on the margins. For that to happen, others would have to allow space

for the Orthodox to bring their own participation. The ethos of the Council needed to be transformed so that all members felt at home in it. Resolutions were fine, but in themselves not enough. A transformed ethos and a deeper fellowship were also needed.

Very Revd Leonid Kishkovsky proposed that, under recommendation c), as well as member churches assisting Assembly delegates to be fully informed about the Special Commission's proposals, the Assembly Planning Committee should also assist.

Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson accepted this amendment.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of the above recommendations as amended.

Each of these recommendations shall be facilitated by staff with the involvement of Central Committee members.

8.14 Membership Issues - Changes to Constitution and Rules

Revd Wesley Grandberg-Michaelson presented proposed changes to the Constitution and Rules. The present proposals arose out of long discussions in the Special Commission, the Executive Committee and the 2002 Central Committee meeting (cf Minutes, pp 81ff). The proposals had been refined by Policy Reference Committee I and were now presented to the Central Committee for discussion and approval.

8.14.1 Amendment to the Constitution

There was discussion on the proposed change in Article II of the Constitution. Concerns were expressed about inconsistency within

the proposals between voting requirements and the move toward decision-making by consensus methods.

The committee recommended that Article II of the Constitution of the World Council of Churches be amended to read:

II Membership

Churches shall be eligible for membership in the World Council of Churches who express their agreement with the basis upon which the Council is founded and satisfy such criteria as the Assembly or Central Committee may prescribe. The Central Committee shall consider applications for membership according to consensus model of decision making. The applicant shall be accepted for a specified interim period of participation in the work of the World Council of Churches and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches. The member churches of the World Council of Churches shall be consulted during the interim period. Following the interim period, the Central Committee shall assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application, in which event the applicant church shall be considered a new member church.

Discussion

Revd Dr Fernando Enns expressed the hope that the Constitution would reflect the spirit that the WCC is a welcoming fellowship.

HE Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus was concerned at the length of the application process and the interim period.

Revd Dr Angelique Walker-Smith was also concerned at the length of the time lapse between a church's making application for membership and actually being accepted as a member.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of proposing to the Assembly the above amendment to Article II of the Constitution of the World Council of Churches.

8.14.2. Amendment to Rule I

The committee further recommended that Rule I of the World Council of Churches be amended as follows (given here in the form in which it was approved):

I. Membership in the Fellowship of the World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches is comprised of churches which have constituted the Council or which have been admitted into membership and which continue to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches. The term “church” as used in this article could also include an association, convention or federation of autonomous churches. A group of churches within a country or region, or within the same confession, may determine to participate in the World Council of Churches as one church. Churches within the same country or region or within the same confession may apply jointly to belong to the fellowship of the Council, in order to respond to their common calling, to strengthen their joint participation and/or to satisfy the requirement of minimum size (Rule I, (3)(b) (iii)). Such groupings of churches are encouraged by the World Council of Churches; each individual church within the grouping must satisfy the criteria for membership in the fellowship

of the World Council of Churches, except the requirements of size. A church seeking affiliation with a grouping of autonomous churches which is a member of the World Council of Churches must agree with the Basis and fulfil the criteria for membership.

The General Secretary shall maintain the official lists of member churches that have been accepted to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, noting any special arrangement accepted by the Assembly or Central Committee. Separate lists shall be maintained of voting and nonvoting member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC.

1. Application

A church that wishes to join the World Council of Churches shall apply in writing to the General Secretary.

2. Processing

The General Secretary shall submit all such applications to the Central Committee (see Art. II of the Constitution) together with such information as he or she considers necessary to enable the Central Committee to make a decision on the application.

3. Criteria

Churches applying to join the World Council of Churches (“applicant churches”) are required first to express agreement with the Basis on which the Council is founded and confirm their commitment to the Purposes and Functions of the Council as defined in Articles I and III of the Constitution. The Basis states: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Applicant churches should give an account of how their faith and witness relate to these norms and practices:

a) Theological

1. In its life and witness, the church professes faith in the Triune God according to the scriptures and as this faith is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
2. The church maintains a ministry of proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating the sacraments as understood by its doctrines.
3. The church baptizes in the name of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and acknowledges the need to move toward the recognition of the Baptism of other churches.
4. The church recognizes the presence and activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside its own boundaries and prays for the gift of God's wisdom to all in the awareness that other member churches also believe in the Holy Trinity and the saving grace of God.
5. The church recognizes in the other member churches of the WCC elements of the true church, even if it does not regard them "as churches in the true and full sense of the word" (Toronto Statement).

b) Organizational

1. The church must produce evidence of sustained autonomous life and organization.

2. The church must be able to take the decision to apply for formal membership in the WCC and continue to belong to the fellowship of the WCC without obtaining the permission of any other body or person.
3. An applicant church must ordinarily have at least fifty thousand members. The Central Committee, for exceptional reasons, may dispense with this requirement and accept a church that does not fulfill the criteria of size.
4. An applicant church with more than 10,000 members but less than 50,000 members that has not been granted an exemption under Rule I, (3) (b) (3), but is otherwise eligible for membership can be admitted as a member subject to the following conditions: (a) it shall not have the right to vote in the Assembly, and (b) it may participate with other churches in selecting five representatives to the Central Committee in accordance with Rule IV, (4) (b) (3). Such church shall be considered as a member church belonging to the fellowship of the WCC in all other respects.
5. Churches must recognize the essential interdependence of the member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC, particularly those of the same confession, and should make every effort to practice constructive ecumenical relations with other churches within their country or region. This will normally mean that the church is a member of the national council of churches or similar body and of the regional/subregional ecumenical organization.

4. Consultation

Before admitting a church to membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, the appropriate world confessional body or bodies and national council or regional ecumenical organization shall be consulted.

5. Resignation

A church which desires to resign its membership in the fellowship of the Council can do so at any time. A church which has resigned but desires to rejoin the Council must again apply for membership.

Discussion

Rule I (3) (a) 1 as initially proposed by the committee read as follows:

'In its life and witness the Church professes faith in the Triune God according to the Scriptures and as this faith is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.'

It gave rise to considerable discussion in the Central Committee. Finally a group of three, under the leadership of Very Revd Leonid Kishkovsky, consulted widely among Central Committee members and proposed an amended formulation, as above, which was accepted by Most Revd Dr Ositelu on behalf of Policy Reference Committee I.

8.14.3 New Rule II

The committee further recommended that a new Rule II be inserted in the Rules, (and the subsequent Rules renumbered accordingly, and in particular the Rules subject to confirmation by the Assembly in the present Rule XVII be renumbered I, II, VI and XVIII) as

follows:

A church that agrees with the Basis of the Council may request in writing to be received as a church in association with the World Council of Churches, stating its reasons for requesting this mode of relating with the Council. If the reasons are approved by the Central Committee, such a church may be accepted to be in association with the World Council of Churches.

Churches in association with the World Council of Churches:

- 1) Can send representative(s) to the Assembly and the Central Committee who can speak with permission of the chair, but have no right to participate in formal decision making whether by consensus or by vote;
- 2) Can be invited to participate in the work of the commissions, advisory groups and other consultative bodies of the Council as consultants or advisors;
- 3) Have the possibility of participating in the work of the WCC as described, but will not be identified with decisions taken or statements issued by the Council;
- 4) Will not be obliged to contribute financial support to the work of the Council but may do so voluntarily. No financial support will be made available from the Council to such churches to facilitate their participation.

The General Secretary shall maintain a list of churches in association with the Council.

The Central Committee unanimously **adopted** as amended the above amendment to Rule I and the new Rule II of the World Council of Churches and recommended them to the Assembly for confirmation.

8.15 Compulsory Membership Contributions

Discussion was held concerning membership fees. Churches not committing funds are corresponded with on a regular basis. The committee was concerned that church leaders also get the correspondence since they are often the people who may be able to act on the concern. The following recommendations come from the Officers. Policy Reference Committee I recommends approval by the Central Committee:

Recommendations (given here in the form in which they were approved):

- a) Churches who have not paid their membership contribution for a given year are not eligible to receive subsidies for their representatives or delegates to attend meetings of WCC governing bodies, committees and the Assembly and other WCC meetings or events in the subsequent year. A church can at any time recover its eligibility to receive such subsidies by paying its membership contribution of the previous year as well as the year in progress.
- b) Churches which have not paid any membership contribution at mid-point between one WCC Assembly and the next will be listed as non-active member churches. This measure will become effective as of 1 January 2004. The status of non-active member church implies that the church is not eligible to send representatives or delegates to meetings of WCC governing bodies, committees and the Assembly, and is not eligible to receive subsidies for other WCC meetings or events. The enforcement of the status of non-active membership shall take effect six months after the church has been informed in writing by the General Secretary.

- c) A church which is listed as a non-active member, or has been informed that it will be listed as such, can at any time be restored as an active member by paying the equivalent of two years of the minimum annual membership contribution, or such amount as is agreed in negotiation with the WCC.

Discussion

Bishop Godfrey Mhogolo said that the proposal gave the impression that, if a church did not pay its contribution for one year, it was no longer needed. If his church did not pay its contribution for one year, he would not be able to attend a Central Committee meeting. His church's contribution was 10% of its national budget.

Dr Marion Best responded that churches should inform the Council if they were having difficulties in paying and that would be taken into account.

Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson said that under the new proposal there was no longer a fixed minimum contribution and all contributions were open to negotiation. For some churches the old minimum was too high. The problem was fundamentally those churches that neither paid nor entered into any communication with the Council.

Eden Grace felt that the formulation under 'c', 'its agreed minimum annual membership contribution', could indicate the figure arrived at under the new formula for calculating membership contributions with no possibility of negotiation. There was no desire on the part of the Finance Committee to be punitive or demanding, and we needed to be sensitive to the situation of churches in the South. She proposed an amendment to read: 'the minimum annual membership

contribution, or such amount as is agreed in negotiation with the WCC'.

HG Bishop Serapion pleaded for a pastoral approach on the part of the Council. Many churches, when they had become member churches, had not been informed about membership contributions, since the emphasis had properly been on membership and not what they would contribute financially. Some member churches, by contrast, regarded the Council as primarily a donor agency. Moreover, for many churches the WCC is not the only ecumenical body to which they belong - there are REOs and others - and they depend on the voluntary giving of their people. All churches should be accountable, but a patient pastoral approach is needed.

Mr John Doom said that in the Pacific, after each Central Committee meeting they sent a letter to member churches informing them of what had happened and reminding them of their responsibilities. We should never tire of reminding churches of their financial responsibilities.

Most Revd Dr Rufus Ositelu, responding, accepted the amendment proposed by Eden Grace.

The Central Committee, with one against and three abstentions, **voted in favour** of the above recommendations as amended.

8.15.1 Churches having no communication with WCC

The Committee raised the concern that some churches have no communication with the Council regarding their participation in the life of the World Council of Churches. Staff are asked to study this

concern and bring their observations to the next meeting of Policy Reference Committee I.

8.16 Review of Work in Light of CUV and Ninth Assembly

Recommendation:

A report be prepared for the 2005 Central Committee, in view of the Ninth Assembly, that summarizes, synthesizes, and evaluates the World Council's work to broaden and deepen our fellowship, according to the CUV. This report will serve as a resource for determining future directions for this work.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of this recommendation.

The Central Committee with two abstentions received the Report of Policy Reference Committee I with appreciation.

9. REPORT OF POLICY REFERENCE COMMITTEE II

Archbishop John Neill presented the report of Policy Reference Committee II. He began by describing the mandate and process of the Committee.

Mandate: The mandate of the Policy Reference Committee II (PRCII) is to identify issues of ecumenical significance emerging from the reports of the moderator, general secretary and officers, and from thematic plenaries, regional meetings and hearings.

Process: Consider reports from the hearings and regional meetings; discuss in-depth the reports of the moderator and general secretary

with written input from PRCI and PRCIII and from the Programme Committee and report on them as well as on the report of the officers; discuss and analyse reports from thematic plenaries on youth, Caring for Life and the Latin American plenary and advise on appropriate ecumenical responses and bring recommendations on the EDAN (Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network) statement, “A Church of All and for All: An Interim Statement.”

9.1 Moderator's Report

The moderator of the Central Committee, His Holiness, Aram I., presented an in-depth and timely report on the concerns and challenges of inter-religious dialogue as a continuing ecumenical concern. The report was greatly appreciated and commended by Central Committee members who proposed that it should be widely shared and made available for member churches. The experience of religious plurality is now being recognized throughout the world.

The issues raised in the report are of great relevance to the world situation – although of different character in different regions, inter-religious dialogue and co-operation are becoming a major concern for WCC member churches everywhere and further highlighted after the events of September 11, 2001 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed it. This is also underscored by the dramatic escalation of the conflict in Israel/Palestine that rightly deserves the special attention of this year's Central Committee.

The PRCII took ample time to reflect on this important report and to receive comments from the Policy Reference Committee I, the hearing on Religious Plurality, and individual Central Committee members as well as information about ongoing work by the Inter-religious Relations and Dialogue team of the WCC and other teams

in the house. The PRCII acknowledges the important work now being done and the relevant material already developed by the WCC, e.g. the document on inter-religious dialogue "Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of other Religions" that was received by the Central Committee meeting in 2002. The PRCII also noted with appreciation that the meeting of the Faith & Order Standing Commission in 2004 in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and the World Mission and Evangelism Conference in 2005 in Athens (Greece) will provide important opportunities for the WCC constituency to engage with the concerns raised by the moderator's report.

PRCII underlined the need to keep a strong link between inter-religious dialogue and inter-religious cooperation as a dialogue of life to equip and encourage member churches to move forward with this agenda.

The PRCII noted several concerns expressed by Central Committee members:

1. A warning not to underestimate the difficulties involved in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation.
2. The different contexts in which dialogue takes place, e.g. in the secularized context of western societies, or countries whose cultures and religious life are predominantly shaped by another religion.
3. The importance of entering dialogue from a sound understanding of our own religious convictions.
4. The need to set clear goals and objectives for dialogue that are understood by all involved and that allow progress to be measured and focus maintained.
5. The need to continue the efforts to clarify the relationship between inter-religious dialogue and the mission and evangelism

of the church as well as between dialogue focusing on doctrinal issues and dialogue moving with important human concerns and accompanying common action.

6. Recognition that plurality exists *within* religions as well as *between* religions and the principles of openness and listening need to be applied in both contexts.

In the light of these considerations, the PRCII recommends:

1. That the moderators report be published in a suitable form and be widely circulated to member churches and to wider constituencies in more than just the WCC official languages.
2. That the report be accompanied by illustrative examples of dialogue in particular situations.
3. That the WCC further develop and share contextualized models of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in order to enable member churches at the local level to be better equipped for this task.
4. That the issue be taken up in an appropriate form at the 2004 Faith and Order Standing Commission meeting and the 2005 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of these recommendations.

9.2. General Secretary's Report

The outgoing General Secretary, Dr Konrad Raiser, gave an inspiring theological introduction into the theme of this year's Central Committee: Caring for Life. The Committee affirms this presentation and commends it for its insightful observations that set the tone for plenary sessions of the following days.

9.2.1 Caring for Life

In view of the forthcoming discussion on the work among persons with disabilities and issues of genetic engineering, he emphasized that both of these areas of work “challenge the churches in the ecumenical fellowship to rethink their understanding of human beings as created by God and of human life as a gift from God.” He raised two significant questions: “What is the meaning of the notion that humanity is made in the image of God? How are we to understand the biblical affirmation about the ‘goodness’ of all created life forms?” In his reflections, the recognition of human dignity and of the integrity of all life took centre stage. Referring to the content of the interim statement prepared by the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN) with the title “A Church of All and for All” (see Appendix III), he concluded with the affirmation that “in Jesus Christ, God shared the human condition in its brokenness and vulnerability in order to redeem it. The death of Jesus on the cross, the brokenness of his body has become for us the very symbol of life. He came that we should have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).”

The discussion in plenary referring to this section of the report strongly affirmed the value of these theological reflections for future work by the WCC on Caring for Life.

9.2.2 Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement

After sharing information on developments in the WCC since the last Central Committee meeting, which included references to the improved financial situation and continued work concerning the report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation, and action taken concerning the invasion of Iraq, he concentrated on

recent developments following last year's Central Committee recommendation on the re-configuration of the ecumenical movement. He explained once again the rationale and objective for this discussion that is meant to strengthen the capacity of the ecumenical movement "to move the Christian community world-wide to a common witness and service in the world of the 21st century." He reported on the process that was initiated.

This section of the General Secretary's report was taken up not only in the plenary, but also in regional meetings and committees. PRCII received contributions from the meetings of the Pacific, Asia and Latin America regions as well as from PRCI. In response to the General Secretary's report and the other contributions received, PRCII had in-depth discussion on the matter. It was vigorously asserted that the process so far does not sufficiently engage the member churches. Already the term "re-configuration" of the ecumenical movement indicates that this process will have major implications for the future shape of the ecumenical movement at different levels and will affect the form and quality of relationships among different constituencies.

In carrying out our mandate to discuss the General Secretary's Report and, based in part on the input from the regional meetings, Policy Reference Committee II together with Policy Reference Committee III recommend (the recommendations given here in the form in which they were approved; cf. also the report of Policy Reference Committee III, pp.154ff):

1. That the Central Committee welcome and affirm the continuing process of reflection and in particular the proposal for the November consultation.
2. That

- a. The member churches should be as fully involved as possible and be engaged in a direct manner that leads to their full participation and feeling of ownership in the process.
- b. In view of the possible lack of time to secure the churches' support the incoming General Secretary be asked to develop a clear outline for the process involving the member churches and providing clarity as to the forthcoming direction of the reconfiguration
- c. As the process continues, as wide as possible a range of interests and experience should be engaged, and the process should focus on the full participation of all member churches with consideration to East/West and North/South concerns.
- d. The process should be grounded in the core vision, values, and basis of the WCC, and recognize the integrity of the WCC's fundamental concerns and commitments.
- e. The focus should remain on the strengthening of the common witness and service of the Christian community world-wide so as to ensure that neither the financial implications nor the level of financial contributions by individual actors are driving the process.
- f. In pursuing its role as 'ecumenical space-maker' and convenor and monitor of the process, the WCC should not lose its prophetic voice, while recognizing this is not its exclusive preserve.

Discussion

The Moderator reminded the Central Committee that the November consultation on reconfiguration was informal in nature.

The General Secretary, responding to the resolutions in the form in which they had been originally presented, emphasized that the churches had already been involved in this process, that the intention was to involve them fully, and that the consultation had never been

envisaged as a decision making meeting. It was important to transfer the ownership of this whole discussion away from the Council and in particular away from the person of the outgoing General Secretary. The meeting would be open-ended with no prejudged conclusions. It was not about restructuring the WCC: it was about reconfiguring the ecumenical movement. He hoped that in the light of his comments, some of the strong concerns expressed in the recommendations in the form in which they had been presented could be softened.

The Moderator enquired whether in the light of the General Secretary's intervention, Archbishop Neill would wish to reformulate the original recommendations.

Archbishop Neill replied that it would be inappropriate to modify the recommendations. They had come from a representative group who felt it proper to issue these warnings and guidelines. They had been carefully elaborated between the two Policy Reference Committees and should not be watered down.

Dr Richard Grounds was concerned that the churches did not feel a sense of ownership of this process. The concern surrounding the November consultation was that it seemed to be a process going on apart from the member churches. He felt that the language of the recommendations as presented was appropriate.

Revd Norman Shanks then proposed a series of amendments, which were accepted by Archbishop Neill.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of the above resolutions as amended.

9.2.3 An Expression of Gratitude

Concluding his report, Dr Konrad Raiser noted that when he begun his work almost eleven years ago, the ecumenical movement was facing a period of transition. He saw his role as facilitating the search for a new self-understanding and a new vision of the WCC. He could not foresee the extent to which this would be overshadowed by a deteriorating financial situation. However, he expressed gratitude that he can hand over his responsibilities at a moment when it appears that the worst of the difficulties have passed.

The applause of the Central Committee members showed the high regard for the work and the witness of the outgoing General Secretary and his extraordinary service to the ecumenical movement.

9.3 Officers' Report

The PRCII gladly received the careful report of the Officers recapitulating the work of the Council since the last Central Committee meeting covering the many aspects of the important challenges and ministry of our common life together.

One of the concerns raised by PRCII in response to the Officer's Report deals with the issue of relocation of programmatic desks which also came to the attention of the Committee through the reports of the regional meetings. PRCII urges that the current practice of relocation be reviewed with a concern for overall coherence and transparency. Additionally such a review should address the question of the selection criteria for identifying which desks are to be relocated.

Another issue of concern is that of sanctions imposed on member churches in the case of non-payment of membership contributions. In the light of reports received from regional meetings, PRCII expresses concern at the consequences on participation from the South if the status of member churches were to be changed to non-active membership. Beyond the issues of the ability to contribute and the non-payment of membership dues, the Committee stressed the need for active communication on the part of both WCC and member churches.

The PRCII notes the Officer's Report on the implementation of the Harare recommendation concerning human sexuality which underlines that the process initiated has proven to be helpful.

Discussion

Revd Wies Houweling requested that an update on the implementation of the Harare recommendation on human sexuality be given to the Central Committee at its 2005 meeting.

The General Secretary, responding, said that the aide-memoire received by the Officers had indicated that by the 2005 Central Committee meeting we might have reached the point where an update could be given to the Central Committee. The Executive Committee would decide how best to present it. However, to make a more specific commitment at this stage would be premature.

9.4 Plenaries

9.4.1 Youth: Caring for Life, Making Another World Possible

The Committee wishes to record its appreciation for the presentations in the plenary. The Committee underlines:

- The necessity of ecumenical leadership development programmes for young people.
- The value of insights, theological perceptions and actions which young people can offer as a gift to the whole Church and the wider society.
- The importance of including young people in all aspects of the life and work of the churches and the World Council of Churches.

Recognizing the significance of the above points for any initiative and work on caring for life and the challenge they pose to the churches, the PRCII recommends:

1. That the Central Committee commend the WCC Internship and Stewards Programme as models for ecumenical formation and leadership training and encourage the WCC member churches to follow up these activities locally, reflecting the Harare Assembly recommendations that the churches themselves should create more opportunities for youth participation in their lives and in the ecumenical movement.
2. That the WCC be asked to review the relationship between the Youth Internship Programme and internships with other WCC programmes.
3. That the WCC, in preparation for the Ninth Assembly, strengthen its youth work focusing on the spiritual and ethical basis for young people's search for economic justice by

accompanying young peoples' participation in the church, the growing civil society and the World Social Forum.

4. That the WCC be urged to strengthen the participation of youth in all areas of its work and give special consideration to ensure a strong and vital youth presence at the Ninth General Assembly as delegates, advisors, stewards, and visitors by securing a minimum of 25% youth, if possible, in each of these categories.
5. That WCC is encouraged to increase exploration of cooperation and partnerships around internships with other organizations such as UN agencies and ecumenical partners to strengthen youth involvement.

Discussion

Revd Heike Bosien, referring to resolution 4, felt that the minimum of 25% youth was a vain hope as regards Assembly delegates. Her church, the Evangelical Church in Germany, had had 32 delegates at Harare, but would have only 10 at Porto Alegre. Other forms of participation for youth needed to be found.

The Central Committee, with three abstentions, **voted in favour** of the above recommendations.

9.4.2 Caring for Life: EDAN - A Church of All and for All: An Interim Statement

The Committee wishes to record its appreciation for the statement entitled "The Church of All and For All - An Interim Statement". The Committee underlines key elements of the statement:

- The character of the statement as an interim statement, opening a continuing discussion with persons with disabilities;

- The acceptance of all persons as made in the image of God , and the inter-relatedness of people;
- The distinction between healing and cure;
- The challenge to the assumption that disability and sin are correlated;
- The gift to the whole Church of the insights, and theological perceptions which persons with disabilities can offer;
- The church as an inclusive community, and the suggestions to churches as to how to become more inclusive, especially concerning worship.

Recognizing the significance of these issues for any initiatives and work on caring for life and the challenge they pose to the churches to be the church to and with persons with disabilities, the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (Justice, Peace Creation Team) and the Faith and Order Team have prepared this interim statement as an example of cross team collaboration, which reflects the Harare Assembly recommendations for a new working style in the WCC.

The PRCII recommends:

1. That the Central Committee receive with appreciation the statement, "The Church of All and For All - An Interim Statement".
2. That the Central Committee commend the statement to the WCC member churches for study and urges them to feedback their comments on the document to WCC for further reflection with EDAN, and to develop out of it appropriate actions to make churches and Christian institutions more accessible to persons with disabilities.

3. That the Central Committee challenge and encourage the WCC member churches to engage persons with disabilities in the totality of church life, including councils, commissions and in the worship life of the church.
4. That the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN) be promoted and supported at all levels of the church, locally, nationally and regionally and at the World Council of Churches.
5. That the churches be urged to advocate and work with governments to ensure that the UN (as agreed in June 2003) will frame a Convention on Disabilities, and that persons with disabilities will themselves be invited to participate in the drafting of such a Convention;
6. That the WCC includes persons with disabilities as members of governing bodies and advisory groups – and to emphasize the desirability of such inclusion when seeking nominations from churches.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of these recommendations.

9.4.3 Caring for Life: Human Genetic Technologies

The committee expresses its appreciation for the second session of the plenary on Caring for Life and the background document appended to this report focussing on genetic engineering.

The PRCII discussed how human genetic technologies add a new dimension to the capabilities of human beings to modify and change the development of human and other species. They touch our fundamental attitude towards life and our deepest convictions about the unique value of each human life. In addition to the societal, the health impacts and the long-term ecological effects of the

technologies, some more profound questions concerning ethical values and of the understanding of the human being and its place in creation are at stake.

These technologies and the legal frameworks around them are rapidly developing. There are significant gaps in which there is no legal or regulatory framework and only little public debate in most of the countries. Of grave concern are racist and de-humanizing aspects of new eugenics and the possible military applications of human genetic technologies. Indigenous Peoples are struggling in many places of the world to defend their genetic data which have become a highly valued resource in the development of new pharmaceuticals and therapies. The development of human genetic technologies reflects to a large extent the interests of powerful transnational corporations and tends to aggravate unbalanced distribution of resources for health that must be questioned.

The two presentations in plenary on the response of the National Council of Churches of Tonga and the WCC's cooperation with the United Methodist Church showed the value of ecumenical cooperation on these issues. There is an urgent need for an ecumenical platform for common exchange and discussion among the churches, with those working in the field, and those most affected, e.g. Indigenous Peoples and agricultural communities.

The Committee noted with appreciation the planned Bossey seminar on genetic engineering in 2004.

The PRC II recommends (given in the form in which the recommendations were approved):

1. That the WCC create a platform for exchange and discussion for the churches concerning issues related to genetic engineering.
2. That the WCC encourage member churches to engage with the issues at stake in listening to people working in the field, to those most affected, and to the witness by other churches.
3. That the WCC present a study document on genetic engineering building on the 1989 guidelines that takes note of the different theological and ethical approaches by different member churches, but also highlights common concerns and initiatives; the work on the study document should include representatives of people working in the field and of those most affected.
4. That the WCC bring these concerns to the next assembly in the framework of the churches' engagement with issues of science and technology.

Discussion

Revd Norman Shanks proposed that recommendation 1 be reduced to read simply, 'That the WCC create a platform for exchange and discussion for the churches concerning issues related to genetic engineering'; and that recommendation 3 be deleted.

Archbishop Neill, responding, accepted Mr Shanks' proposed amendment to recommendation 1, but resisted his proposal to delete recommendation 3, as it indicated work to be done.

The Central Committee, with one abstention, **voted in favour** of the above recommendations as amended.

9.4.4 Caring for Life: A Latin American Perspective

The Committee records its deep appreciation for the inspiring experiences and reflections shared during the plenary session. The plenary presenters renewed our sense of deep felt gratitude for the testimony of the churches in Latin America in their witness to life, especially during the difficult times of the military regimes in many countries of the region and also now in these critical times of globalization.

To listen to the voices of the churches and of the people in Latin America is of crucial importance during this Central Committee as we prepare for the forthcoming Ninth General Assembly of the WCC in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. As the city that hosted the World Social Forum three times, the name of Porto Alegre became synonymous with the powerful vision of a world, in which human dignity and justice count and God's precious gift of life is celebrated; a world, offering alternatives to exclusion, marginalization and destruction of the earth.

The Committee especially underlines:

- The important historical dimension presented by the panelists of the witness of the Latin American churches for the care for life. It reminds us of our common task to share and nurture these memories that provide a sense of direction and meaning in the midst of changing realities. These experiences ground and enrich biblical and theological reflection that respond to the challenges of the life of the people in the spirit of Latin American liberation theology.
- The creative theological reflection on the work by the churches in Brazil within the framework of the Decade to Overcome

Violence highlighted the two central elements of human dignity and the grace of God.

- The response by the members of the Central Committee showed that the prophetic call to justice and care for life presents a real opportunity for a meaningful witness to the God of life in the context of increasing concentration of power, severe economic injustices and environmental destruction. Caring for Life invites us to continued reflection on the role of Christianity for the future.

The PRCII recommends:

1. That the WCC member churches be invited to reflect further on their past and present involvement in the area of Caring for Life in their own contexts.
2. That the churches be encouraged to continue their efforts to affirm the dignity of people affected by the negative consequences of economic globalization and support them in their struggle for life.
2. That the churches in Latin America continue to deepen and broaden their theological reflections on human dignity within the context of the DOV and share their reflections with churches from other regions through WCC and CLAI.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of the above recommendations.

9.5 Regional Meetings

The PRCII wishes to thank those regional meetings that submitted reports for the Committee's deliberation. Issues of note for the

Central Committee arising from the regional meetings include the following.

WCC's financial constraints and the consequent changes in policies, structures and emphases are raising concerns about the participation of churches and ecumenical partners in **Asia**.

The Asian voice in the WCC may be weakened by diminishing resources and the downsizing of staff. In light of this they call for the following:

- that necessary measures be taken to ensure the participation of people from Asia in the decision making bodies, newly formed commissions, events, etc.
- that the ministries of the churches in the South, particularly those in crises situations, are accompanied and supported.
- That more time be allotted for regional meetings at the meetings of the Central Committee, so as to have adequate time to prepare for Asian participation and input.

The PRCII noted that the other primary concern was that the reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement must extend to areas of mission and diakonia, justice and peace, as Christians live in communities amidst religious plurality and numerous threats to life.

PRCII reports that the **North American** regional meeting wholeheartedly affirmed the choice of the USA as the 2004 DOV annual focus in order to better address current challenges of increasing cycles of violence.

The **Pacific** region members raised the issue of full participation. Their concern centred around the relocation of the Pacific Desk. The situation is heightened by there being only one WCC staff

member in Geneva from the region. The members of the Central Committee highlighted two issues - the process in which the decision was made and the future of the relocated desk. The Committee affirms the planned review process of the relocated office to be conducted within a year of the relocation.

The PRCII recommends:

That the review of the relocation of the Pacific Desk be expanded to address the whole policy of relocations so as to provide an overall coherence and transparency in the implementation of relocation. Particular regard should be given to the specific context of each region and the significance of the Geneva location to the work of a particular regional or programme desk, e.g. Indigenous Peoples Programme.

The **Latin American** regional meeting also strongly echoed these concerns over membership non-payment and participation as well as concerns on the process of reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of this recommendation.

9.6 Hearings

The PRCII discussed all six hearings organized for this Central Committee meeting and reviewed written reports from the proceedings. Because of the critical moment in the Sudan peace negotiations the Committee commends the work done on the Sudan peace process. The Committee also felt strongly that the immediately escalating crisis in Palestine/Israel demands attention and a decisive response by this Central Committee.

The PRCII recommends :

1. In future Central Committee meetings more time be given for hearings as important and vital sharing opportunities for member churches.
2. This Central Committee respond strongly to the current situation in Palestine/Israel, both in the public arena and in the work of the WCC with the member churches.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of these recommendations

Archbishop Neill invited the members of Policy Reference Committee II and the staff who had assisted them to stand [applause].

The Central Committee received the Report of Policy Reference Committee II with appreciation.

10. REPORT OF POLICY REFERENCE COMMITTEE III

Bishop Eberhardt Renz presented the Report of Policy Reference Committee III.

10.1 Reports of Officers, Moderator and General Secretary

A number of comments, relating in particular to the restructuring of the WCC in the Officers' Report and to inter-faith dialogue in the Moderator's Report, had been passed to Policy Reference Committee II for consideration. Bishop Renz drew particular attention to the fact that there are now only 136 full-time equivalent positions on the

WCC staff. The Moderator's Report presented a new challenge to the Council and the churches to engage in dialogue, but it was not a new topic and there was much valuable existing material available for use.

10.2 Consensus Procedures

The Committee had received and discussed an Interim Report on Consensus Procedures (see Appendix IV).

The Committee recommended that the Central Committee agree to the proposed further process outlined in Section IX of the report, subject to the following additional points:

- a. The Steering Committee of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation should be invited to contribute to the further discussion.
- b. Reception of new members should be handled by consensus (Section V.B.) and the WCC constitution should be amended accordingly.
- c. In relation to Governance Procedure, the reference to “smaller procedural matters” in Section V.C. should be deleted, as such matters are adequately covered in Section V.D. Exceptions should be kept to a minimum.
- d. In planning the agenda for the next Central Committee meeting, the Executive Committee should make provision for training Central Committee members in the culture of consensus at the start of the meeting and for evaluation of the experience at the end.
- e. There was particular emphasis on the importance of Section V.E. (mentioning dissenting voice(s) in the report) and

Section VII (relating to the provision of appropriate support and assistance to the Moderator).

- f. In relation to the Order of Speaking (Section VI.), care should be taken in the drafting of the rules of procedure and manual, to avoid implying an adversarial approach or culture.

The General Secretary, referring to point (b) above concerning the reception of new members by consensus, indicated that its constitutional implications had already been taken into consideration by Policy Reference Committee I in their proposed reformulation of Article II of the Constitution.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of the above recommendation.

10.3 Membership Study

The Committee made the following recommendations:

1. That the Central Committee agree provisionally to the proposed amendments to the WCC Constitution and Rules (expressing the principles agreed at the 2002 Central Committee meeting), so that these could be circulated to member churches for comment and the matter finally reviewed at the 2005 Central Committee meeting for submission to the Ninth Assembly in 2006.
2. That the Central Committee instruct the Executive Committee to consider the addition of a future clause in Rule 1, to provide for the possibility of suspending a church from membership, and report to the 2005 Central Committee meeting.
3. That the Central Committee agree to the proposed revision of Rule IX to reflect the new staffing arrangements (no change of

principle is involved; for text of revised Rule IX cf. chapter 12.1, p. 185ff).

4. That, to avoid any confusion regarding churches which are associated with the WCC (as differentiated from the former term “Associate Member Church”), the title line should read “Churches which are in association with the WCC”.

Bishop Renz, in introducing these recommendations, noted that there was already provision in the Rules for a member church to resign, but no provision for the suspension of a member church that had ceased to fulfil the criteria of membership. That eventuality should be provided for in the Rules, and hence the instruction to the Executive Committee in recommendation 2.

The Central Committee unanimously **voted in favour** of the above recommendations.

10.4 Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement

The Committee had had a wide-ranging discussion on this issue, taking into consideration the General Secretary's Report (paragraphs 21-31) and other documentation, particularly the planning document for the proposed consultation on Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement at Antelias, Lebanon, 17-20 November 2003.

The Committee recommended that the Central Committee welcome and affirm the continuing process of reflection and in particular the proposal for the November consultation; and that the following significant points made in their discussion should be taken into account as the discussion proceeds:

- a. Concern was expressed that the churches should be as fully involved as possible from the start of the process.
- b. Concern was also expressed regarding the possible lack of time to secure their support. The need for urgency, however, may militate against an open-ended process of reflection.
- c. As the process continues, as wide as possible a range of interests and experience should be engaged.
- d. The process should be grounded in the core vision, values, and basis of the WCC, and recognize the integrity of the WCC's fundamental concerns and commitments.
- e. In pursuing its role as 'ecumenical space-makers', and convenor and monitor of the process, the WCC must not lose its prophetic voice, while recognizing this is not its exclusive preserve.

Revd Dr Tyrone Pitts requested clarification, as a similar set of recommendations on the same matter were being presented to the Central Committee from Policy Reference Committee II.

The General Secretary, responding, agreed that the matter was on the agendas of both Policy Reference Committees II and III. The intention had been that Policy Reference Committee II would discuss this early in their meetings and pass their findings to Policy Reference Committee III to assist them in formulating their recommendations. That had not happened. The result was two uncoordinated sets of recommendations being placed before the Central Committee by two policy reference committees.

Revd Dr Tyrone Pitts said that in Policy Reference Committee II they had been discussing the issue in the light of the General Secretary's Report, which was part of their mandate. He was concerned that many Central Committee members had not been

involved in these discussions and that member churches should be directly consulted. The ownership of the process was unclear.

Archbishop John Neill (Moderator of Policy Reference Committee II) regarded reconfiguration as a very serious issue. Half of the General Secretary's Report had been devoted to it and thus it appeared naturally on the agenda of Policy Reference Committee II. They had discussed it in their last session, but by then it had been too late to send their findings to Policy Reference Committee III. In Policy Reference Committee II, they had reached a consensus: they wished to see the process slowed down and it be made clear that the November meeting was no more than a hearing or a consultation. It was important that at this point the concerns of Policy Reference Committee II should also be considered.

Bishop Samuel Azariah suggested that the recommendations from the two policy reference committees be discussed together.

The General Secretary suggested that the officers of the two policy reference committees should meet together and elaborate a single set of recommendations incorporating the concerns of each committee.

Bishop Renz, accepting this suggestion, agreed to withdraw the above recommendations on reconfiguration.

[Note: this debate continued in the presentation of the Report of Policy Reference Committee II; for the final versions of the recommendations as agreed cf. p.134ff].

10.5 Assembly Preparations

10.5.1 Seat Allocation

On the matter of seat allocation, the Committee endorsed the guidelines agreed by the Executive Committee in February 2003 as follows:

- A. The allocation of seats to member churches should reflect the realities of WCC membership (size, region, confession, membership in several countries, etc).
- B. In order to ensure an inclusive and balanced assembly the following goals should be established: women 50%; youth 25%; lay persons 50%; Orthodox 25%.
- C. The total number of delegates (85% + 15%) should not significantly exceed 700.
- D. A minimum of one delegate for each member church is a goal, provided that this can be accomplished within the other established goals of representation for the assembly.
- E. The model used for Harare for churches with significant membership in several countries and regions should (with suitable modifications) be used again.
- F. All churches should seek to make their delegation inclusive and balanced.

They agreed in particular the limit of 700 delegates and the proposed percentages to achieve an inclusive and balanced assembly. The Committee recognized the implications for the large churches whose delegations would be significantly smaller than at previous assemblies, and the potential difficulty in securing balances within these smaller delegations. The Committee noted the possibility for creative solutions to be explored - for example, through larger

churches sending observers, visitors, etc.; and through churches in a region collaborating in appointing their delegates.

Bishop Renz recognized that it might not be possible, within the figure of 700 delegates to meet the requirements of the Executive Committee's guidelines.

The Committee recommended (given here in the form in which the recommendation was approved):

- a. That the Central Committee adopt officially the guidelines proposed by the Executive Committee, subject to the review of guidelines D and E above by the Executive Committee in the light of points raised.
- b. That the churches be invited to provide precise and updated figures with regard to their membership.
- c. That as numbers of faithful are confirmed, work on the allocation be made on the basis of the suggested model with the aim of finalizing the seat allocation by the time of the next Executive Committee meeting (February 2004).

Discussion

OKRin Marita Krueger was concerned at the effect of notionally treating the Evangelical Church in Germany as three churches - Lutheran, Reformed and United, resulting in a reduced number of delegates and fewer churches having direct representation, and having representation only through the Evangelical Church in Germany. She requested the Executive Committee to reconsider the allocation of seats

She also observed that, with many small churches sending only one delegate, it would be difficult for quotas to be achieved. Also, she was happy with the Orthodox having 25% of the 85% seats allocated to member churches, but asked whether the 25% Orthodox requirement would also apply to the 15% allocated to the Central Committee to redress balances.

Revd Dr Fernando Enns said that smaller churches had felt appreciated in the WCC and had played a major role. The Assembly was the one place where they had direct representation. Regarding guideline D above, he pointed out that it was in contradiction to Rule III (1) (a) (2), which stated that 'Each member church shall be entitled to a minimum of one delegate'. Any qualification of this would be against the Rules. He proposed omitting the words '...provided that this can be accomplished within the other established goals of representation for the Assembly'.

Bishop Renz, responding to OKRin Krueger, stated that the 15% membership of Assembly nominated by the Central Committee to redress balances was not subject to the 25% Orthodox requirement. As for Dr Enns's proposal to amend the guidelines decided by the Executive Committee, that was not a document of Policy Reference Committee III, and he was thus not in a position to accept an amendment to it.

The General Secretary said that asking the Executive Committee to reconsider their seat allocation guidelines would unduly delay the process. He indicated that guideline E did allow for variations from strict adherence to the guidelines in particular circumstances, and that could apply, for example, to Germany and Switzerland. The Executive Committee would have to finalize the seat allocation at

their meeting in February 2004, but they could be asked to review clauses D and E in their guidelines.

Returning to OKRin Krueger's question on Orthodox percentages, he confirmed that of the 85% nominated by the churches 25% would be Orthodox, but of the 15% nominated by the Central Committee, some would be Orthodox, but the 15% was a device to achieve balances of women, youth, unordained, etc.

Revd Norman Shanks proposed adding to recommendation (a) above 'subject to the review of guidelines D and E above by the Executive Committee in the light of the points raised.'

Bishop Renz accepted this proposed amendment.

The Central Committee with five abstentions **voted in favour** of the above recommendations as amended.

10.5.2 Assembly Theme

After a full and very demanding discussion, taking account of and developing all the suggestions and variations proposed, the Committee agreed to present two possibilities for consideration and choice by the Central Committee:

- GOD, IN YOUR GRACE, TRANSFORM THE WORLD
- SEEDS OF GOD'S LOVE – HARVEST OF JUSTICE

The General Secretary stated that the two proposed themes before the Central Committee were at this point available only in English. However, their translatability into the other WCC working languages, and into Portuguese, had been taken into account in formulating them. Other language versions would have to be

decided in consultation with the relevant member churches, and those versions might have a reverse effect on the final English version. The Central Committee should understand that the final adjustment of nuances of language would have to be made after their decision, and the Central Committee should authorize the Officers to agree the final version of the theme in the WCC's working languages and in Portuguese and announce it to the member churches.

The Central Committee **voted**:

77 votes in favour of 'God, in your Grace, Transform the World'

22 votes in favour of 'Seeds of God's Love - Harvest of Justice'

There were no abstentions.

The Central Committee had thus voted in favour of 'God, in your Grace, Transform the World' as the theme for the Ninth Assembly and authorized the Officers to agree the final versions of the theme in the Council's working languages and in Portuguese.

10.5.3 Other Assembly Matters

The Committee noted with approval the Core Group's approach relating to the style of the assembly, language policy, preparatory meetings and events etc., and heard with appreciation the positive indications from the recent Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation regarding the possibility of greater collaboration in the planning of major assemblies.

Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson drew attention to the resolution passed at the Central Committee meeting 2002 (Minutes p.87) 'that the next Assembly include a powerful symbolic act in affirmation of baptism in the life of the church, building on the celebration at

Santiago de Compostela, the appropriate nature of which is yet to be determined.'

Revd Norman Shanks undertook that the Assembly Planning Committee would consider this and report to the Central Committee meeting in 2005.

Bishop Renz thanked the members of Policy Reference Committee III for their hard work and invited them to stand [applause].

The Central Committee **received** the Report of Policy Reference Committee III with appreciation.

11. REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Dr Marion Best, presiding, invited Bishop McKinley Young to present the Report of the Finance Committee, in which he was assisted by Dean Anders Gadegaard.

11.1 Approval of the Financial Statements of 2002

The Finance Committee reviewed the audited financial statements of 2002. The Finance Committee noted that although there were improvements, the Council's Reserves listed on the balance sheet were invested in land and buildings. The Council was therefore holding no real reserves at its ready disposition, and financial plans would be required to redress this situation.

The Finance Committee also noted that the credit line guaranteed by mortgage of the Ecumenical Centre had not been drawn upon during 2002, nor to date.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee unanimously **approved** the 2002 financial statements as audited and published.

11.2 KPMG Management Report

The audit partner and staff from KPMG and a representative of the Audit Committee met with the Finance Committee to present the report to management on observations arising from the audit mandate 2002. The Committee sought confirmation that when undertaking the annual review of Programme Fund balances to ensure appropriate disposition of any inactive balance, staff leadership group members would participate in decision-making, and funding partners would be consulted where it was judged appropriate. The Committee issued a note of caution concerning the decentralization process. In the Committee's view, in order to work in a location, it might not be necessary to actually open an office. Careful cost analysis should be made before proceeding. The Finance Committee expressed the wish to participate in the decentralization evaluation process next year.

Concerning the overall financial situation of the Council, the audit partner explained that the auditors hold the responsibility to review the Council's ability to meet its obligations for the following 12 months when issuing an opinion on a prior year's financial results. The audit partner commented that there had been considerable improvement in financial controls over the past two years. KPMG remained concerned that the Council continue to pursue good financial discipline in planning within its means.

The Finance Committee **received** the report, with thanks to the auditors for their participation.

11.3 Results to 31 July 2003 and Full-Year Projections

The Finance Committee reviewed the results for the seven months to 31 July 2003 and the full year projection.

The full-year forecast anticipated that Programme income and expenditure would be close to budget, with a drawdown of CHF 3.6 million in programme fund balances. The forecast assumed that contributions would be paid as pledged and exchange rates remain steady, and that Programme expenditure, in particular grants, would increase in the final months of the year as Programme work was completed.

The Committee commended the staff for its careful management of expenditure. In particular, following its recommendations concerning Central Committee organisation costs in 2002, the Committee endorsed what it perceived as a fitting change in culture, reflected in certain details in the Central Committee infrastructure.

The Committee **endorses** the guidance of the Finance Subcommittee which required that

- any investment gains for the year 2003 be returned to the investment reserve, and
- expenses as budgeted should not increase unless there would be a matching increase in income, in order that the net result for the year be maintained as planned.

11.4 Cash Flow Management 2003

The cash flow plan for 2003 was reviewed. Provided the assumptions concerning the full-year forecast and various

anticipated movements in working capital were met, the plan showed that the WCC might expect to withdraw only CHF 1.5 million from its General Fund investment account for the year. In comparison, CHF 8.8 million were withdrawn from the General Fund investment account in 2002.

The Committee **received** this report and noted that cash flow management was under control.

11.5 Budget 2004

The Finance Committee reviewed a draft budget for 2004. The Finance Committee considered that where a drop in income was expected, activities expenditure should decrease accordingly.

After reflection, the Finance Committee proposed the following budget for 2004. In the draft budget, the Programme costs of CHF 39 million equal Contributions income for Programmes and other income. In addition, a credit to General Reserves of CHF 2.13 would be obtained from undesignated income. The revised budget was presented to the Programme Committee.

	CHF million
Unspent balances brought forward	10.42
Planned for use 2004	2.28
Membership and undesignated	7.40
Programme contributions	26.95
Other income	4.64
International Ecumenical Initiatives	2.65
Ecumenical Research Centre	0.50

Total income	42.14
Programme costs	39.00
International Ecumenical Initiatives	2.79
Ecumenical Research Centre	0.50
Total expenditure	42.29
Net income/ expenditure	(0.15)
Credit to General Reserves	2.13
Balance drawdown	(2.28)
Net income/ expenditure	(0.15)
<i>Unspent balances carried forward</i>	<i>8.14</i>

It should be noted that the above budget does not include the offices in Poland and Croatia. The Finance Committee recommends that these offices should be included in the next report and that expenses for 2004 should be kept within the available income. The budget also does not include the Assembly until the Assembly budget is approved.

Dean Gadegaard emphasized that the logic behind the budget was that the income and expenditure were equalized.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee unanimously **approved** the 2004 budget as presented.

11.6 Framework Budget 2005

In accordance with Central Committee's recommendation of 2002 to establish a new and more timely budget cycle, a draft framework

budget for 2005 was presented and discussed. Consistent with the principles reflected in the budget 2004, the framework for 2005 showed Programme income and expenses of equal amount, and while drawing down the remaining Programme Fund balances by CHF 2.29 million, also projected a contribution to General Reserves of CHF 1 million.

The framework budget for 2005 was as follows:

	CHF million	CHF million
	2004	2005
Unspent balances brought forward	10.42	8.14
Planned for use	2.28	2.29
Membership and undesignated	7.40	7.40
Programme contributions	26.95	26.31
Other income	4.64	4.84
International Ecumenical Initiatives	2.65	2.79
Ecumenical Research Centre	0.50	0.20
Assembly		3.05
Total income	42.14	44.59
Programme costs	39.00	39.84
International Ecumenical Initiatives	2.79	2.79
Ecumenical Research Centre	0.50	0.20
Assembly		2.20
Total expenditure	42.29	45.03
Net income/ expenditure	(0.15)	(0.44)
Credit to General Reserves	2.13	1.00
Credit to Assembly Reserve		0.85

Balance drawdown	(2.28)	(2.29)
Net income/ expenditure	(0.15)	(0.44)
<i>Unspent balances carried forward</i>	<i>8.14</i>	<i>5.85</i>

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee unanimously **received** the 2005 framework budget as presented.

11.7 Cash Flow Plans for 2004 and 2005

The Finance Committee reviewed cash flow plans for 2004 and 2005 derived from the draft budget and budget framework, and including capital expenditure plans, loan repayment details, anticipated movements in working capital.

The cash flow plans concluded that on the above working assumptions, the WCC might expect to add to its investments rather than withdraw. At the same time, with Programme Fund balances reducing, the coverage of investments for the Programme Funds would be sufficient, with an indication that Specific Programme Reserves might be fully covered in 2004.

The Committee **received** the cash flow plans.

11.8 Assembly Budget

An initial 9th Assembly budget was presented. At this time with pledges and indications received from approximately 1/3 of the member churches, it appears that the total income, including Assembly balances carried over from Harare, could total CHF 6.3 million. The total income for the 8th Assembly, by comparison, was

CHF 13.4 million. The Finance Committee believes that an Assembly can be held with expenditures of CHF 6.3 million. The 9th Assembly will have 700 delegates meeting for 10 days rather than 996 delegates meeting for 12 days, as in Harare. This Assembly will be held in a country and at a facility where expenses will be much lower than past Assemblies. The Finance Committee cautions, however, that it is unlikely any future Assembly, particularly one in a developed country, will be able to be held for this amount of money.

To achieve an Assembly costing CHF 6.3 million will mean that expenses need to be monitored very carefully. In particular, it is important to note that it is unlikely that the proportion of delegates receiving a full subsidy for Porto Alegre will be the same as those who received them for Harare.

The Finance Committee delegated to the Finance Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee to undertake at its next meeting a review of the WCC's general policy concerning subsidies, to be defined in time for the Assembly.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee **approved**, with three abstentions, the Assembly budget of CHF 6.3 million.

11.9 Bossey

The Finance Committee reviewed the terms and conditions of the mortgage loan contract to financing the renovation of Bossey. The WCC has contracted a loan of CHF 6,000,000 for five years at a fixed rate of 3.15%, and a one year loan of CHF 400,000 at a rate to

vary annually. The latter loan is to be repaid in instalments of CHF 50,000 per year.

The total cost of the Bossey renovation project was CHF 8.7 million. The external financing had been alleviated because the US Conference had permitted 95% of the Kunett Endowment Fund to be used towards meeting the cost of the renovation.

The Finance Committee endorsed the decision of the Bossey Board, requiring that Bossey contribute CHF 30,000 annually to reconstituting the Endowment Fund.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee **ratified**, with one abstention, the mortgage loans of CHF 6.4 million.

11.10 Proposed Basis for Calculation of Membership Contributions

The Finance Committee discussed a staff proposal on Membership Contributions from 2004 onwards.

The Committee confirmed the basic principles of the proposal:

1. The new system for membership contributions should be fair, transparent and objectively determined for all members
2. The system should honour the goals of the Membership Campaign to reach a target of CHF 10 million by the time of the next Assembly with all member churches making a minimum contribution of CHF 1,000.

The new membership contribution calculation is based on:

- a) the size of the church, using the membership data submitted by the churches for the allocation of seats for the 9th Assembly
- b) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country (or countries) where the church is located.

Churches which at present pay membership contributions which are higher than those derived from the new membership calculation system will be requested to continue their current level of giving.

The Committee added that in specific circumstances, such as the case of a church where members' income is significantly lower than the national average, the church should communicate its concerns to the WCC. The Finance Committee is authorised to adjust contributions in individual cases.

The member churches will be informed of their requested membership contribution before January 1, 2004, the date when the new system will be introduced. Additional information on the calculation method, together with some comparative data, will accompany the request.

As many churches decide on their 2004 budget well in advance, it seems unreasonable to expect churches to be able to decide on any change in their membership contribution at short notice. The year 2004 will be considered as a year of transition.

Based on the experiences in 2004 and the discussions with member churches, the working of the system will be evaluated mid-year. Based on this evaluation the proposed contribution structure may be adjusted. If so, revised proposals will be submitted to the Executive Committee for further action.

The Finance Committee appointed a small task force (Eden Grace, Rt. Revd Tom Butler, Revd Dr David Thompson) to accompany the introduction of the new system. The task force has been delegated by the Finance Committee to decide on the adjustments to be made in individual cases.

Discussion

Bishop Godfrey Mhogolo feared that the new calculation would produce a suggested contribution for his church that it would not be able to pay.

Revd Gregor Henderson stated that for him it was a delight to receive such a report from the Finance Committee. It gave a sense of security and hope. He warmed to the proposed basis for membership contributions and considered that the linkage with the GDP of the country where a church is located made for a reasonable basis for calculation. He noted the listing in the Background Document of contributions proportionately by centimes per member, which showed the generosity of small churches, and hoped that a full listing could be made available as an encouragement to churches to be generous.

Noting that in the case of a church, where members' income is significantly lower than the national average, a downward adjustment of that church's contribution could be made, he wondered if an upward adjustment should not be made for churches where members' income is higher than the national average.

Revd Ruth Bottoms welcomed the proposal as fair, transparent and objective. In the case of churches such as her own that pay for attendance of their members at meetings of governing bodies, etc.,

she asked whether this factor would be taken into account when calculating suggested contributions.

Mr John Doom noted with satisfaction that churches presently paying contributions higher than those produced by the new calculation system would be requested to maintain their present level of giving. He felt that the new calculation method would encourage the Pacific churches to begin paying or increase their contributions.

Ms Margarita Neliubova commended the small churches that had made generous contributions. She noted that some churches received financial support from their governments or benefited from a church tax system, while others did not. That should also be taken into account.

Revd Dr Angelique Walker-Smith appreciated the work of the Finance Committee in increasing contributions. She felt it important to take into account that there are economic disparities within nations with a high GDP. The exercise should be informed with an encouraging, not a punitive, spirit.

Dean Gadegaard, responding, reassured Bishop Mhogolo that suggested contributions would be commensurate with ability to pay. Hence the GDP factor in arriving at an appropriate contribution. He agreed with Mr Henderson that a full listing of churches showing their contributions proportionately by centimes per member would be useful and it was possible. Responding to Ms Bottoms, he stated that payment by churches for attendance by their members at governing bodies, etc., was acknowledged in the Financial Report, but it was reckoned to be over and above a church's regular contribution. The budget assumes such continuing additional

support from churches. Responding to Ms Neliubova and Dr Walker-Smith, he agreed that churches paying lower contributions than calculated should not be marginalized. It was possible that common guidelines would emerge.

After discussion, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee **approved**, with two against and three abstentions, the new membership calculation system as outlined in these minutes, to be introduced from 1 January 2004.

The General Secretary commented that the same membership figures would be used both as a basis for calculating membership contributions and for allocating seats at the Assembly. The desired aim of membership contributions reaching CHF 10 million was to safeguard the WCC's integrity as a fellowship of churches. The WCC should not be financially dependent on partners funding specific programmes.

11.11 Income Development Strategy

A paper reviewing the current income structure and the income development strategy was considered. The Finance Committee noted that 90% of the WCC's contributions income is provided by some 20 member churches and funding partners. There had been serious efforts to raise funds from non-traditional donors, in particular from foundations. However, results had been disappointing to date.

The Finance Committee recognized that strengthening relationships with member churches and the principal funding partners remained of the highest priority. To achieve their increased confidence, it was essential to be able to present very clearly the results of a

Programme and its expected future achievements. In addition, WCC needed to build its own understanding of partners' organizations, ensuring that it presented its funding proposals to the appropriate levels and divisions within a structure.

The Finance Committee endorsed the recommendations of the report, which proposed firstly increased efforts with the WCC's funding partners as a priority, and secondly, continued efforts towards non-traditional donors with professional presentations, resorting to external expertise and training in this respect as appropriate.

11.12 Ethical Guidelines for Contributions from Non-traditional Sources

The Finance Committee assessed a report proposing ethical guidelines for the acceptance of contributions from non-traditional donors. It was noted that the WCC holds general ethical guidelines for investments, and that these already constituted a standard for acceptance of funds. It was also observed that at present there had been but little success in fund-raising with non-traditional donors.

The Finance Committee recommended that a group of three Finance Committee members review any contributions from non-traditional sources in order to conclude on their acceptability.

11.13 Investments

The Finance Committee reviewed a report summarizing actions taken over the last 12 months concerning investments. The Finance Committee had requested that a study be conducted to review the financial implications of restructuring the General Fund investment

portfolio towards fixed return investment instruments only. The Finance Committee noted that the Executive Committee in its meeting of February 2003 had delegated to the Finance Officers the task of reviewing that report and deciding upon the investment structure.

The Finance Officers had determined that in the interests of further reducing investment risk given the WCC's financial situation, and aware of plans to further sell investments in 2003 to meet Programme Fund drawdowns, the General Fund investment portfolio be restructured to hold fixed return investment instruments only. The intention is that this objective be achieved before the year end 2003.

The Finance Committee noted that the investment of approximately CHF 700,000 in Oikocredit continued to be held. The Committee considered that the amount of the investment in Oikocredit was satisfactory, and requested that its value be reported in relation to the General Reserves of the Council, General Reserves being defined as in the Funds and Reserves Policy discussed below.

11.14 Statement of Investment Objectives and Policy

In accordance with its responsibility and duty to consider and make recommendations to the Central Committee on investment policy and procedures (Constitution & Rules of the WCC; Rule VIII, 2 (b) (3)), the Finance Committee reviewed and revised the existing Investment Policy documents.

The revised Statement of Investment Objectives and Policy includes general ethical guidelines based on the guidelines issued by the Central Committee in its meeting of September 12 – 20, 1996, and

for which approval was made in full at the following Central Committee meeting of September 11 – 19, 1997. In addition, it defines the investment objectives for each of the portfolios, clarifies the authorities to revise investment guidelines, defines the investment reserve and the requirements for monitoring and reporting on performance.

The Central Committee had before it the revised Statement, and, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, unanimously **approved** the revised Statement of Investment Objectives and Policy.

11.15 Tender Process for Audit 2004

The Finance Committee heard a report from the Audit Committee concerning the reasons for delaying the process for tender of the audit mandate, which Central Committee had requested be undertaken for the audit of financial year 2003. The Finance Committee accepted the reasons, in particular recognizing the fact that towards the end of 2002, management attention had required to be directed as an absolute priority to ensuring improvement in the financial situation. The Audit Committee had recommended and the Finance Committee agreed that the tender process be begun in 2003 for the financial year 2004.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee unanimously **accepted** that the tender process could not be conducted towards the end of 2002 for the financial year 2003 as requested, but required that it be conducted in 2003 for the financial year 2004.

11.16 Appointment of Auditors 2003

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee **appointed**, with one abstention, KPMG as auditors for the year 2003.

11.17 Funds and Reserves Policy Review

With the objectives of clarifying the financial situation of the WCC, ensuring increased transparency in accounting and promoting our partners' confidence in WCC's financial reporting, the Finance Committee defined a Funds and Reserves Policy, following a proposal submitted for consideration.

(i) Funds and Reserves Categories

WCC continues to take the necessary steps to categorize its Funds and Reserves into the usually recognized classifications applied by charities, namely:

Unrestricted Funds

Designated Funds (being Unrestricted Funds assigned by internal authorities)

Designated Funds – Fixed Assets

Restricted Funds

Endowment Funds

General Reserves

General Reserves are defined as those funds available to the WCC after meeting its obligations and commitments, without realizing fixed assets.

Work is undertaken in consultation with auditors as appropriate, to ensure continued compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards. Report on progress is made to the Finance Committee, and between its meetings to the Finance Sub-committee of the Executive Committee.

(ii) Annual Review of Programme Funds

The Council holds the same obligations towards Programme Funds as if they were Restricted Funds. As above, efforts are made to ensure that as closely as possible, the Programme Funds actually be Restricted Funds.

Programme Fund balances may be divided into two categories, namely Funds to be held for over one year, being principally funds for particular conferences, and Funds for disbursement within the usual 12 month period of their receipt.

An annual review of Programme Funds will be conducted to ensure:

- the completeness of documentation justifying the categorization as Programme Funds
- continued correct classifications,
- appropriate disposition of outstanding balances in accordance with donor wishes,
- planned timing of disbursement, if disbursement outstanding beyond one year.

Normally, the Programme Funds balances for disbursement within the year for each Core Programme should remain level, at a value approximately equal to 1/12 to 2/12 of general annual contributions to Programme, excluding multi-lateral sharing. Should there be exceptions to this pattern at the time of review, reasons are

investigated and appropriate action taken, including contact with partners to negotiate solutions acceptable to all.

The review is documented by responsible Finance Officers.

(iii) Other Funds Categories

Other Funds categories will be kept to a minimum. Reasons for such categories will be documented, and should derive from specific requirement of International Financial Reporting Standards, or from audit recommendation. The Finance Committee will approve any changes in Other Funds categories.

(iv) Transaction Authority

Transactions through Reserves accounts as defined in the Balance Sheet of December 31, 2002 are to be approved prior to finalization of the Financial Statements by the Officers of the Finance Committee.

(v) General Reserves

The required balance of General Reserves, as defined at point (i), is three months' salary costs. The WCC Finance Committee monitors the level of General Reserves, and reviews the required balance as appropriate.

(vi) Reporting

The Balance Sheet of the WCC prepared under International Financial Reporting Standards does not require disclosure of the amount of General Reserves as defined at point (i). However, responsible Finance department staff will include in their regular management reports assessments of the available Reserves and inform both the Finance Sub-Committee and Finance Committee of the evolution.

The Central Committee unanimously **approved** the Funds and Reserves Policy.

11.18 WCC Visibility Profile

Further to the Finance Committee's recommendation, Central Committee in its last meeting had requested that there be an assessment of a proposal to increase the visibility of the WCC, by attracting media attention at an event to take place within the context of a Central Committee meeting. It had been considered that increased visibility would have a positive impact in fund-raising efforts with non-traditional donors.

It was reported that as yet there had not been focused effort in defining how this objective might best be achieved. The Finance Committee considered that the issue should be actively pursued in the context of the WCC's communications strategy.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Central Committee unanimously **requested** that the appropriate staff consider in what manner the WCC might appropriately increase its visibility, presenting their reflections to the Executive Committee in February 2004.

Bishop McKinley Young expressed thanks to the members of the Finance Committee and the staff for their work. He invited members of the Finance Committee to stand [applause]. He then moved acceptance of the Report.

The Central Committee **accepted**, with one abstention, the report of the Finance Committee.

12. STAFFING

12.1 Revision of Rule IX (now Rule X)

The General Secretary introduced a proposed revision of Rule IX. It was necessary as a consequence of the internal organizational changes that had taken place. There were no substantive changes and the revision would bring Rule IX into line with the present situation. The proposed revision was (proposed changes in italics):

1. The Central Committee shall elect or appoint or provide for the election or appointment of persons of special competence to conduct the continuing operations of the World Council of Churches. These persons collectively constitute the staff.
2. The General Secretary shall be elected by the Central Committee. He or she is the chief executive officer of the World Council. As such, he or she is the head of the staff. When the position of General Secretary becomes vacant, the Executive Committee shall appoint an acting General Secretary.
- 3.A. In addition to the General Secretary, the Central Committee shall itself elect one or more Deputy General Secretaries, *the Directors for Programme and Management, and any other executive director.*
- 3.B. The Executive Committee shall *appoint* all *programme* staff and shall report its actions to the Central Committee. *Specialized, administrative and house staff shall be appointed by the General Secretary.*
4. The Staff Leadership Group shall consist of the General Secretary (Moderator), the Deputy General Secretary or Secretaries, the *Executive Secretary in the General Secretariat* (Secretary), and the executive directors. Other staff may be invited for specific items on the agenda.

The Staff Leadership Group is the chief internal management team. Its overall responsibility is to advise the General Secretary in his/her role as chief executive officer of the Council. It has the task of ensuring that all activities of the Council are carried out in an integrated and cohesive manner. For this purpose it will:

- a. Implement policies and priorities established by the Central and Executive Committees and facilitate proposals to be submitted to them.
 - b. Provide for overall coordination, decide on priorities and the direction of the Council's activities.
 - c. Manage and allocate human and financial resources, propose the budget to the Finance Committees of the Executive and Central Committees and ensure that programme planning is integrated with anticipated resources available.
 - d. Assist the General Secretary in the appointment of staff and special reference groups.
5. There shall be a Staff *Executive* Group. Its membership shall include ex-officio the members of the Staff Leadership Group, the *Programme* Team Coordinators, *the Director of Bossey and the Management Services Managers*. It shall meet regularly (normally *twice* a month); it shall be moderated by a *member of the Staff Leadership Group on a rotating basis*.

The Staff *Executive* Group shall advise the General Secretary and the Staff Leadership Group. Its purpose is to:

- a. Advise on matters of long-range planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities.

- b. Consider the preparation of the budget.
 - c. Assure regular sharing of information and provide for discussion and interpretation of policies and issues affecting the Council as a whole.
 - d. Facilitate the coordination of the activities of the teams.
 - e. Appoint ad-hoc or permanent functional staff groups to advise on specific areas of concern.
 - f. Promote a spirit and style of work to strengthen and promote integration, cooperation and collegiality.
6. The normal terms of appointment for the General Secretary and for the Deputy General Secretary or Secretaries shall be five years. Unless some other period is stated in the resolution making the appointment, the first term of office for all other staff appointed by the Executive or Central Committee shall normally be four years from the date of the appointment. All appointments shall be reviewed one year before their expiration.

Retirement shall normally be at sixty-five for both men and women and in no case shall it be later than the end of the year in which a staff member reaches the age of sixty-eight.

The Central Committee unanimously **approved** the revised Rule IX. [Note: Consequent upon the introduction of new Rule II the above Rule IX is now renumbered Rule X]

12.2 Appointments and Extensions

The General Secretary, with the authorization of the Executive Committee, recommended that the two following appointments be made, the legal obligations of the World Council of Churches to be

binding only as from the actual signing by both parties of the corresponding contracts:

International Affairs

Revd Laurence BROPLEH, (Liberia, United Methodist Church), be appointed as **UN Representative** for a period of 2 years as from 1 September 2003 (renewable after evaluation),

Diakonia & Solidarity

Revd Deborah DEWINTER , (USA, United Church of Christ-UCC), be appointed as **US Desk Officer** for a period of 4 years as from 1 September 2003.

The Central Committee **approved**, with two abstentions, these two appointments.

The General Secretary drew the attention of the Committee to the Addendum to the Staffing Report of the Central Committee 2002, Central Committee Minutes, pp.124-125, concerning the use of the word 'indefinite' in contract extensions.

He then, with the authorization of the Executive Committee, recommended that the five following contracts be extended, the legal obligations of the World Council of Churches to be binding only as from the actual signing by both parties of the corresponding contract extensions:

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Ecumenical Institute Bossey

Fr Dr Ioan SAUCA (Romania, Romanian Orthodox Church (Eastern)), Director, from 1 January 2005, indefinite, (end of 2004 : 10 yrs and 8 months)

Church and Ecumenical Relations

Ms Teny PIRRI-SIMONIAN (Lebanon, Armenian Apostolic Church (Oriental)), from 1 January 2005, indefinite, (end of 2004 : 18 years)

PROGRAMMES

Faith & Order

Dr Tamara GRDZELIDZE (Georgia, Orthodox Church of Georgia), from 1 January 2005, 3 years extension (will complete 7 years)

Justice, Peace & Creation

Ms Marilia SCHULLER (Brazil, Methodist Church in Brazil), from 1 January 2005, indefinite, (end of 2004 : 13 years)

International Affairs

Ms Salpy ESKIDJIAN (Cyprus, Armenian Apostolic Church (Oriental)), from 1 January 2005, indefinite, (end of 2004 : 10 years)

The Central Committee **approved**, with two abstentions, these five contract extensions.

The General Secretary informed the Central Committee of the impending departure on the dates indicated of the following staff members from service with the WCC:

Public Information

Ms Sara SPEICHER (USA, Church of the Brethren), 30 November 2003 (letter of resignation of contract by Ms Sara Speicher), will complete 6.11 yrs.

Justice, Peace & Creation

Revd Freddy KNUTSEN (Norway, Church of Norway), 31 December 2003 (end of contract), will complete 7 yrs.

General Secretariat

Revd Dr Konrad RAISER, Federal Republic of Germany, EKD (Lutheran), 31 December 2003, will complete 11 years. Retirement.

Church & Ecumenical Relations

Mr Huibert VAN BEEK, Netherlands, Swiss Protestant Church Federation, 31 December 2003, will complete 26 years. Retirement.

Mission & Ecumenical Formation

Ms Evelyn APPIAH, Ghana, Methodist Church, 31 December 2003, will complete 33 years, end of the 6 months Consultant's contract.

Justice, Peace & Creation

Ms Athena PERALTA, Philippines, United Church in the Philippines, 31 December 2003, end of the 2 years Consultant's contract on Women, Economy & Rural Development.

The Central Committee, in noting these departures, expressed particular thanks and appreciation to Mr Huibert van Beek and Ms Evelyn Appiah for their long service with the WCC.

There were no new vacancies declared, but the recruitment process was still open for two previously declared vacancies: PIT Team Co-

ordinator and Programme Liaison Officer and Programme Executive for Youth. Recommendations of the selected candidates would be presented to the Officers' Meeting in November 2003.

13. MEMBERSHIP OF NEW COMMISSIONS

The General Secretary presented the proposed membership of the two new commissions established earlier during the Central Committee meeting. He explained that prior consultation with member churches had not been possible as there had been no mandate to establish these commissions before now. However, a number of persons on the lists had been members of the previous advisory groups, while new names appropriate to the changed structures had been added. The proposed membership of the commissions were:

Commission of the Churches on Diakonia and Development

Africa

- 1. Revd Dibeela M. Prince, United Congregational Church of Botswana
- 2. Mrs May C. Sengendo, Church of the Province of Uganda

Asia

- 3. Bishop Duleep de Chikara, Church of Sri Lanka
- 4. Revd Toshimasa Yamamoto, United Church in Japan

Caribbean

- 5. Revd Trevor Edwards, Jamaica Baptist Union
- 6. Revd Eunice Santana, Disciples of Christ, Puerto Rico

Europe

7. Ms Margarita Nelioubova, Russian Orthodox Church
8. Mr Dan Apostu, Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Czech Republic
9. Revd Eberhard Hitzler, Evangelical Church in Germany

Latin America

10. Ms Noemi Espinoza, Reformed Church in Honduras
11. Revd Carlos Gilberto Bock, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil

Middle East

12. Ms Aline Papazian, Armenian Apostolic Church, MECC Unit on Life and Service, Lebanon
13. Bishop Anba Youannes, Coptic Orthodox Church, Egypt

North America

14. Revd Chris Ferguson, United Church of Canada
15. Revd André L. Spivey, African Methodist Episcopal Church, USA

Pacific

16. Mme Céline Hoiore, Evangelical Church of French Polynesia, Tahiti
17. Revd Dr. Paulo Koria, Congregational Christian Church of Samoa

Agencies/Specialized Ministries

18. Revd Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, Evangelical Church in Germany, Diakonisches Werk der EKD, Germany
19. Mr Roel Aalbersberg, Uniting Church in the Netherlands, ICCO, Netherlands

20. Mr Christer Akesson (Proposed Moderator), Church of Sweden
21. Ms Kirsten Laursen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Church World Service, USA

Consultant/alternate: Mr. Triantafilou, IOCC, USA

Commission on Justice, Peace and Creation

Members from the former Justice Peace Creation Advisory Group

1. Lic. Elias Crisostomo Abramides, Ecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox), Argentina
2. Bishop V. Devasahayam, Church of South India, India
3. Ms Priscilla Karimi Kinoti, Methodist Church in Kenya
4. Ms Mukami McCrum, Church of Scotland

Members from the Women's Advisory Group

5. Mrs Sophia Wasa Rokobuli Gegeyo, Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea
6. Revd Irja Askola, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
7. Ms Suzanne Matale, United Church of Zambia

Members from the Youth Advisory Group

8. Ms Liza Lei Garcia, United Church of Christ in the Philippines
9. Mr Ashley W. Hodgson Rios, Moravian Church in Nicaragua

Additional Names

Specialized Agencies

10. Mr Andrew Ignatieff, Orthodox Church in America, Canada

11. Mr Erik Lysén, Church of Sweden
12. Mr Rudi Bunztel, Evangelical Church in Germany

Others – with specializations

13. Ms Asha Abraham, Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, India
14. Prof. Dr. Chae, Soo-Il, Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea
15. Sra Betty Ruth Lozano Lerma, Baptist Church in Colombia
16. Mr Lukasz Nazarko, Orthodox Church in Poland
17. Revd Sealin Garlett, Uniting Church in Australia
18. Ms Natalie Maxson, United Church of Canada
19. Ms Georgine Kengne Djeutane, Evangelical Church of Cameroon
20. Revd Noel Fernandez Collot, Baptist Church in Cuba
21. Ms Diana Harutyunyan, Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenia
22. Mr Gregory Roschin, Russian Orthodox Church
23. Revd Robina Winbush (Proposed Moderator), Presbyterian Church USA

Very Revd Leonid Kishkovsky had a concern about the Commission on Diakonia and Development. The International Orthodox Christian Charities agency, which worked closely with other agencies, was unique in that it was Orthodox. It would be good if its director could be included in that commission as a consultant. The General Secretary replied that the IOCC director would be welcome in that role.

The Central Committee **approved**, with four abstentions, the membership of the Commission of the Churches on Diakonia and Development and the Commission on Justice, Peace and Creation.

14. FAREWELL TO DR KONRAD RAISER AS GENERAL SECRETARY

A large congregation gathered in the Ecumenical Centre Chapel on Sunday 31 August 2003 to mark the retirement of Dr Konrad Raiser on 31 December 2003.

His Holiness Aram I, Moderator of the Central Committee, preached on the text Luke 4:18-19.

Jesus had depicted his ministry in this world as an outreach in service to the poor, oppressed, sick and marginalized. Jesus, at the end of his earthly life had sent out his disciples to continue that God-given mission. The ecumenical movement was a vital dimension of that missionary outreach, and that vision of ecumenism had been at the heart of Dr Raiser's ecumenical ministry.

He continued by describing Dr Raiser's qualities as a brilliant professor, a sensitive pastor, a humble person and a person against superficial activism.

Referring to Dr Raiser's term as General Secretary, he spoke of his strong conviction, on assuming office in 1992, that the ecumenical movement was in transition. Dr Raiser had contributed to the Council's continuing efforts to respond realistically, faithfully and responsibly to changing situations and emerging new realities. Dr Raiser would remain a leading figure in the ecumenical movement and would continue to be with us in the ecumenical boat.

He also acknowledged and thanked Dr Elisabeth Raiser for accompanying Konrad as wife and partner, and for serving in her turn in the ecumenical cause. He invited the congregation to give

thanks to God for leading Dr Raiser to the ecumenical movement. Through his ecumenical involvement he had been able to contribute to the church's ministry to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Representatives from each world region offered prayers of thanksgiving for Dr Raiser's ministry.

At a subsequent supper reception at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Ms Sara Speicher spoke of Dr Raiser's diligence in visiting the churches and the regions, and each region in turn paid tribute to Dr Raiser's ministry to them and made presentations to Dr and Mrs Raiser. A book of greetings was available in which those present were invited to write a personal message to Dr Raiser on his retirement.

15. ELECTION OF THE NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

In a closed session on 27 August 2003, with His Holiness Aram I as Moderator, Professor Maake Masango, Moderator of the Search Committee appointed to propose a successor to Revd Dr Konrad Raiser, presented the Search Committee's Report.

The Search Committee had met on three occasions: during the meeting of the Central Committee in August/September 2002, in Amsterdam on 3-5 April 2003, and at Tirana, Albania on 20-25 June 2003. All members of the Search Committee had been present at all three meetings.

The Search Committee's Report contained recommendations that were noted by the Central Committee:

- a) To prevent further confusion, the Central Committee clarify the procedure for the selection of the Search Committee;
- b) To ensure integrity and transparency in the search process, the Search Committee be provided the option to notify the Central Committee and member churches immediately regarding the outcome of their decision.

The Search Committee were unanimous in presenting two names: Revd Dr Trond Bakkevig and Revd Dr Samuel Kobia.

After questions to the Moderator of the Search Committee concerning the process by which the Search Committee had reached its decision, he presented the candidates to the Central Committee. Each candidate made a personal statement to the Committee.

In a further closed session on 28 August 2003, with 134 members present, the Central Committee proceeded to a secret ballot.

After a count of the ballot papers by the WCC Presidents, the Moderator **declared Revd Dr Samuel Kobia to be elected** General Secretary of the World Council of Churches with effect from 1 January 2004.

The closed session ended and the Central Committee resumed in open session.

Dr Bakkevig and Dr Kobia entered the hall to applause.

The Moderator, addressing all present, stated that we stood at an important point in the history of the World Council of Churches. At the previous meeting of the Central Committee, the Committee had elected a Search Committee to reflect for them. Yesterday and today

the Search Committee had shared the results of their reflection with the Central Committee. Through the whole process they had reminded themselves that they were a fellowship with spirituality at their heart, spirituality being the presence of God with God's people.

The election process had been smooth and the Central Committee had acted with a deep sense of responsibility. At the conclusion of the process, the Central Committee gave thanks to their common Lord who had led them.

He then announced that Revd Dr Samuel Kobia had been elected the next General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Dr Kobia was given a standing ovation.

Addressing Dr Kobia, the Moderator said that he was sure Dr Kobia would continue to serve the ecumenical movement with the same responsibility as in the past. He prayed that God would sustain his ministry.

Addressing Dr Bakkevig, he said that Dr Bakkevig's service to his church, the WCC and the ecumenical movement as a whole was highly regarded [applause]. He appreciated Dr Bakkevig's readiness to serve and was confident that he would continue to serve the ecumenical movement and participate in the WCC [applause].

Revd Dr Samuel Kobia, in accepting his election as General Secretary, said he felt humbled at his election. His wife, Ruth, and his daughter joined him in thanking the Central Committee for the confidence they had shown in him. He was confident that his friendship with Dr Bakkevig would continue. He believed that the diversity of the WCC was its strength. It was a unique organization

and he would continue to serve it with all his dedication, God helping him.

Referring to the Special Commission, he saw it as a model of how a problem can be transformed into an opportunity. He noted that the Central Committee had accepted the Special Commission's recommendations and stated that they would be faithfully implemented and incorporated into the WCC's structures.

Referring to the world situation, he stated that we were living in a broken world, where many lived meaningless lives. The answer did not lie in politics, economics or military might, but it is at root a moral challenge, a huge challenge to the churches and the WCC. Underlying historical injustices must be righted, and in our commitment to non-violent ways to peace, justice and reconciliation, we need the inner strength arising out of our eucharistic fellowship.

Referring to Dr Konrad Raiser, he paid tribute to him as a friend and colleague. He had provided strong decisive leadership to the WCC during difficult times [applause]. Thanks to Dr Raiser's resolve, he was leaving at a time of increasing stabilization of the Council [applause].

Referring to the WCC's financial situation, he noted the severe drop in income over the past seven years, but was pleased to note that the 2003 Report of the Finance Committee had indicated that income was beginning to be held, a trend that had to continue. Stable income was essential, and the core work of the WCC had to be financially assured.

Referring to the WCC staff and governing bodies, he saw himself as captain of a team. Welfare of staff would be a high priority. His leadership would not only be in the field of finance, but also in the field of spirituality. He asked people to accompany him on his journey as General Secretary, for it would be a journey that all would have to walk together. He knew from his time as General Secretary of the Kenya Christian Council that 'the higher you go, the colder it becomes'. Social solidarity had been a mark of the 20th century, and spirituality would be the mark of the 21st century, and in it spiritual accompaniment would be important.

In conclusion, Dr Kobia quoted an African proverb: 'If you want to walk fast, walk alone; if you want to go far, walk together with others.' Our task was that all may be one, to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Moderator thanked Dr Kobia for his speech, invited all present to a reception outside the hall and closed the session.

16. PLENARY ON YOUTH CARING FOR LIFE: MAKING ANOTHER WORLD POSSIBLE

Prior to the Plenary 'Youth Caring for Life', there was worship in the Ecumenical Centre Chapel, where Revd Zoltan Tarr preached on Colossians 1:15-16, declaring that unjust rulers and systems were conquered by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. His message was illustrated by a mime by young people: families in the North and families in the South were kept apart by oppressors, the South getting poorer and the North richer. By the power of the cross they fought oppression and were reunited in one human family under the cross.

Mrs Donnalie Edwards-Cabey, presiding, welcomed members to the Youth Plenary.

A video of a three-week leadership training course for 30 young people from all over the world in Cuba, 'Facing the Future - Ecumenical Youth Encounter', was shown. At the end of the session a copy of the video was given to each Central Committee member.

Ms Ashley Seaman led Bible study on Matthew 5:13-16. In his ministry, by preaching the Good News, Jesus was restoring people to their senses, of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. The blind, the Gerasene demoniac, the woman with the haemorrhage - all had their senses restored. In the Last Supper, Jesus invited us to use our sense of taste, to taste bread and wine.

Through baptism, God restores us to our spiritual senses - of hope, joy, mutuality, equality and unity in the body of Christ. As a baptized community, we have a responsibility to tend each other's growth into being fully alive in our senses.

Jesus must have been hot and sweating as he pronounced the Beatitudes, and, at this point, he might have licked his lips and tasted salt, thus suggesting to him the saying, 'You are the salt of the earth.' For literally, biologically, we were made of salt.

[At this point stewards distributed a crystal of salt to those present, who were invited to taste the salt and to celebrate who they were, the salt of the earth.]

'You are the salt of the earth,' was not only a biological statement: it was also a spiritual challenge to us, to get salty. Shortly the Central

Committee would be hearing from young people how they were finding new ways of being salt and light in today's world.

Mrs Edwards-Cabey thanked Ms Seaman for her Bible study.

In a visual presentation, stewards throughout the hall then demonstrated how light can radiate outwards removing, for example, violence and non-education and replacing them with peace and education. A list, prepared during the previous week's ecumenical leadership seminar, was then read out, showing how young people are being salt and light in their communities. Two examples of this were then described in detail.

Mr Matome Makgoba, President of the South African Council of Churches Youth Forum, described the many challenges confronting South Africa. Under difficult conditions, young people could still be found committed to the work of the church. The elders in church and community found it difficult to allow young people to express themselves, but youth needed their support. At the centre of the challenges was HIV/AIDS, which was ravaging people of all ages, but young people in particular. Factors behind its spread were negligence, the use of sex as a form of entertainment, and prostitution to generate income for family support.

Churches and civil organizations had been campaigning for the provision of anti-retro viral drugs, and the government had recently made the long overdue announcement that it would start providing them.

He further described the discrimination and rejection experienced by HIV persons and pleaded for greater openness in the churches to live with these people as God would love us to. The churches needed to

make more space and time available for those who were sick. Churches found it difficult to talk openly about HIV/AIDS in their services, and places of worship needed to become centres of open dialogue.

He described what young people are doing: addressing the challenges of HIV/AIDS in national structures, dealing with home-based care and support, counselling and awareness-building, and initiating peer groups with HIV/AIDS as an integral part of their programme.

His final plea was that the WCC as the global ecumenical body should nurture and develop the immeasurable talents and gifts of young people for the ecumenical movement in our endeavour to impact on matters of global importance.

Mr Tale Hungnes, its President, described the work of Changemaker, the youth movement of Norwegian Church Aid.

He began by observing that Wall Street, New York, now the home of free trade and free markets, was originally a slave market, and received its name from a wall built to prevent slaves escaping.

He continued by indicating the lack of freedom for many in today's world. Where was the freedom of the landless people of Brazil, for example, or of a politician in Mozambique, forced by the International Monetary Fund to spend money on external debt instead of on schools for illiterate children?

Young people in Changemaker, with different beliefs and different church affiliations, all shared a deep concern for the big differences between the poor and the rich people of the world. His impression

was that young people in the North were fed up with charity and no longer believed that charity alone could change the world. What could change the world was solidarity and political action.

Poverty and injustice were not coincidences and one of the main reasons for injustice was the international debt crisis, which was far from over.

Changemaker was focussing on illegitimate debt, i.e. the debt arising out of loans to discredited dictatorships. It was now challenging the Norwegian government to be the first Western government to acknowledge the issue of illegitimate debt, or 'dictator debt'.

His closing challenge to the Central Committee was to encourage young people to rise up against oppression and to back them up when they needed it, and to participate actively in the work for cancellation of illegitimate debt.

The two presentations were followed by five minutes of reflection around the tables on how churches can recognize and strengthen the ministry of youth in caring for life.

Mrs Edwards-Cabey in closing thanked all who had contributed to the plenary session.

17. PLENARY ON CARING FOR LIFE: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

Prior to the Plenary on Caring for Life: People with Disabilities and Biotechnology, there was worship in the Ecumenical Centre Chapel,

where the Revd Dr Fernando Enns preached on Revelation 22: 1-2. He shared his experience from the recent Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe. There they had been aware of the great vision that the church carried within itself: the Lord is the Lamb; the majestic has become the servant. That was the way God ruled, and that was the political message of Revelation, relativizing all other power. As Christians, we believed that the kingdom of God, the reality of just relations, had been established among us, and it was by witnessing to the truth of that vision that it would unfold. Slavery, apartheid and the Berlin wall had all been regarded as permanent, but they had gone. Wars and social injustice were still believed, even in the church, to be inevitable. It was time for the ecumenical fellowship of churches to live up to its vision.

Dr Agnes Abuom, presiding, welcomed members to the plenary. She introduced Revd Arne Fritzson, Advisor with Disabilities, who would lead the Bible study.

Revd Arne Fritzson invited those present to meditate together on Psalm 8 and what it said about being human in God's world. It was important to acknowledge the claim of the other as other on us and to acknowledge that their world of meaning represents also a genuine possibility for ourselves. To honour a fellow human being as neighbour was to acknowledge that we live in the same world. Failure to do this resulted in discrimination, oppression and even elimination of those who were different.

Drawing attention to his own speech impairment, the result of a stroke, he saw himself as a reminder to all of the possibility of their suffering a stroke and thus of their own vulnerability. Some found it hard to recognise persons with disabilities because it involved them having to face their own vulnerability.

Referring to the psalm, he described how, in a cosmic perspective humans are so small and the possibility of having a disability simply emphasized that. But humans had been made a little lower than God, in the imago Dei. It was important to keep those two images together: humans as small and yet a little lower than God.

There was, however, a bulwark against what threatened the imago Dei in humankind: the mouths of babes and infants.

The cry of a baby was a sign of frustration, but at the same time a sign of hope, hope for a change. Children who had stopped crying had done so because they had learned that it did not result in change. As long as babies cried, they had hope: the cry of a baby was the most authentic prayer of all.

The Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN) was facing the double reality of frustration and hope, with lack of accessibility, lack of understanding and pastoral attitudes dishonouring the dignity of persons with disabilities.

Dr Aboum thanked Mr Fritzson for his Bible study and then invited Revd Samuel Kabue to address the committee on the work of EDAN and to introduce the document produced by EDAN, 'A Church of all and for all: an Interim Statement.

Revd Samuel Kabue, reading from a Braille text, introduced the document, saying that it had been the result of nearly three years' work, to which Faith and Order had made a tremendous contribution. The document's various sections raised the fundamental theological principles for approaching disability issues. People with disabilities are individuals, not a homogeneous group. Disabilities should not be regarded negatively, but as part of the

human diversity and plurality of God's creation. The section 'Disabilities and Healing' differentiated between healing and cure, and the Gospel healing stories were not merely about restoration of the body but also about individuals being restored into society. The section 'Each Human Being a Gift' highlighted that those with and without disabilities were all part of the one church and each had gifts and talents to contribute.

Having introduced the statement, Mr Kabue described the work of EDAN. Despite many years of addressing disability in the WCC, there were still excluding walls in our churches. We must remember that the church is called to be one body. EDAN was a movement aiming to establish networks in regions, countries and churches. Regional consultations had been held. Internationally, they were interested in the proposed United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and he urged members of the Central Committee to lobby their governments to support the Convention, the subject of current UN debate.

Disability being a justice issue, the church had to examine itself as to how to practice justice in appointments to committees, provision of services and giving space to all. Ensuring that persons with disabilities were part of the church had to be an ecumenical commitment. The 2002 budget reduction to less than a quarter of what it had been in previous years had not been a sign of commitment! While the total integration of disability concerns into all aspects of WCC work was the ultimate aim, specific funding for EDAN was still necessary and he appealed for the committed support of the Central Committee.

He finally declared that responding to and fully including people with disabilities was not an option for the church but a defining characteristic.

Dr Abuom thanked Mr Kabue for his presentation and invited the Committee to break into buzz groups before she called for contributions from the floor.

Revd Ofelia Ortega expressed appreciation of the plenary presentations. Over the years she had witnessed the struggles for a network so that the disability issue could be incorporated into the ecumenical agenda. She stressed the importance of theological reflection on the issue, as well as political action.

Rt Revd Christopher Epting was also grateful to the two presenters. He had noted the distinction in the Interim Statement between healing and cure and asked for further exploration of that area.

Revd Fr Dr Kondothra George appreciated the unique initiative behind the present session, in which people with disabilities had been speaking for themselves. He saw the imago Dei not as a closed definition. The Greek Fathers, such as Gregory of Nyssa, had not made the distinction we habitually make between normal and abnormal. For them it was humanity as one body that was made in the imago Dei.

Bishop Martin Hein spoke of the progress made in Germany in including persons with disabilities over the past ten years, but now social attitudes had changed. There were fewer resources and people with disabilities were under pressure to explain why they were costing society so much. With pre-natal diagnosis of fetuses with disability with the option of abortion and elderly people with

disabilities with the option of euthanasia, their right to life must be defended, and people with disabilities could help us find an answer to such issues. The God-given dignity of human life must be defended from the beginning of life to its end.

HE Metropolitan Athanasios Papas of Heliopolis and Theira, in expressing thanks to both speakers, added the suggestion that the Statement be supplemented with a chapter on the changing attitudes in society towards people with disabilities in the course of history.

Dr Abuom, in closing the first session, reiterated thanks to the two presenters. She stressed that we must all recognize our vulnerability; and also that the theological consideration of these issues was important.

Dr Abuom, in opening the second session, indicated that they were now moving into another area, already touched on in the previous session by Bishop Hein, that of genetic engineering.

A power-point presentation was made. It reviewed statements on Caring for Life from previous WCC Assemblies, and stated that the Central Committee in 1999 had identified Caring for Life as a programme emphasis taking forward the WCC's earlier work on building communities with the marginalized and excluded. That same session of the Central Committee had also stated that fresh attention was needed to the spiritual dimensions of Caring for Life, particularly as these related to ethical questions arising from biotechnology. Two examples of successful cooperation with ecumenical partners in responding to the challenge of biotechnology had been the defence of the Tongan population against an attempt to monopolize their DNA data, and close cooperation with the General

Board for Church and Society of the United Methodist Church in the United States.

Mr John Doom presented a paper, 'Whose DNA? Resistance against Biopiracy in Tonga', from a text by Lopeti Senituli and Margaret Boyes.

In November 2000, the Australian biotech company Autogen had announced that it had secured the exclusive rights to the entire gene pool of the Tongan people, through a contract signed with the Tongan Ministry of Health.

The Tongan population had previously heard nothing of this agreement, and the Tongan Human Rights and Democracy Movement had strongly condemned the agreement.

Subsequently, the WCC in close collaboration with the Tongan Human Rights and Democracy Movement and the Tongan National Council of Churches had organized a Bioethics Consultation for the Pacific in Tonga in March 2001. The final statement from that consultation had stressed the need for 'prior informed consent and the right of people to information regarding any negotiations in the field of genetic research in the Pacific.'

The Pacific church and community leaders further stated, inter alia: 'The people of the Pacific have the right to manage their own biological resources; we confirm our stand against the unauthorized collection and commercialization of genetic resources from the Pacific.' They also made recommendations to Pacific Island Governments and Councils of Chiefs that there should be full public discussion, with independent experts fully available, before any

government signs any agreement impacting people's rights.

Their recommendations to the Pacific churches, the Pacific Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches was that they 'continue to be at the forefront in the promotion of human dignity, defending human rights, and protecting the environment... They must make sure that our human, animal, plant and micro-organism species and their genetic and other biological inheritance be safeguarded from exploitation and manipulation.'

He concluded with the plea that the WCC must have the mandate to facilitate this.

Dr Abuom thanked Mr Doom for his presentation.

Ms Lois Dauway then addressed the Central Committee as a 'living letter' from the United Methodist Church in the USA.

Speaking the commentary herself, she gave a power-point presentation on 'The United Methodist Church and its Concerns regarding Genetics'. One particular point made was that the issue was too vast to be dealt with by churches individually. The United Methodist Church thus worked with others, including hosting a meeting of the WCC Genetics Group in 2003. The presentation concluded with the words, 'The churches together can make a major impact on the global discussion of genetic issues. If we fail to work together, the world will not hear our concerns for justice and integrity.'

As a 'living letter' she also brought with her a written letter from James E. Winkler, General Secretary of the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society. In it, he wrote that

the church had a unique voice to bring to the questions raised by biotechnology, and that the World Council of Churches was a unique ecumenical platform for the consideration of these questions. He urged the WCC to prepare an Ecumenical Platform and study document for the churches by 2005.

Copies of his letter were tabled for Central Committee members.

Dr Abuom thanked Ms Dauway and the United Methodist Church for their contribution and invited members to discuss the following questions in buzz groups: How do churches engage responsibly with the challenges posed by genetic engineering, and how can the WCC facilitate mutual exchange and common witness by the member churches and ecumenical partners? She then invited plenary discussion

Revd Dr Natan Setiabudi had been impressed by Samuel Kabue's rapid reading from his Braille script, which demonstrated that he was more able than he himself was in that regard. In Dr Setiabudi's language 'EDAN' meant creation, and EDAN was showing itself to be creative. The two presenters, Mr Fritzson and Mr Kabue, were not less able than the rest of those present. We needed the participation of all in order to be whole.

Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen was hesitant to speak of disability: people have different abilities, such as the blind using other senses and reading by touch instead of by sight.

Dr Frieda Mangunsong was grateful for the EDAN Statement. She drew attention to the needs of parents of children with disabilities. The Statement would be of use to them.

Revd Dr Fernando Enns joined the chorus of thanks for the presentations. He particularly appreciated the reminder to us of our vulnerability. He recalled that at creation, God declared creation to be good, not perfect. The theological analysis in the EDAN Statement was valuable, particularly in that it reminded us of the vulnerability of Godself, as seen in the cross of Christ. This would guard us from a triumphalistic theology.

HB Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durres and All Albania thought that the presenters had shown themselves to be doubly-abled people. We did, however, need to remember that that is not the case for some with disabilities, such as people with learning difficulties. He also appreciated the EDAN Statement, but drew attention to paragraph 27, which implied that, if we are in Christ, we are in God's image. That was 'too Christian'. The old Adam was still human, still in the image of God. There was need for sensitivity in this area.

Mr John Doom spoke of the need to examine the causes of some disabilities and referred to the Chernobyl disaster and land mines. There were many children with disabilities in his Pacific region because of thirty years of nuclear testing. He pleaded for help as they accompanied young people with disabilities thus caused.

Bishop Anba Youannes stated that people with disabilities formed 4% of the population in his land and pleaded for help in providing services for them in developing countries.

Bishop Telmor Sartison thanked the two presenters, particularly for their reminding us of our vulnerability. Mentioning the steps that had been taken to help people using wheelchairs, such as low-step buses, and ramps at curbs, he declared that we still avoided them

because of an inner fear that we too one day could be in a like situation. We needed a dialogue in, not with, the world on this issue.

Bishop Martin Hein, speaking on biotechnology, mentioned four necessary criteria for the debate. There needed to be a theological investigation of what life is; a minimum of scientific knowledge as we talk with people engaged in this field; openness in declaring our theological interests; and a close international network. It was an essential task for the WCC to foster such a network.

HE Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus spoke of the recent high numbers of deaths in Europe because of high temperatures, which should also be considered.

HE Archbishop Aristarchos Peristeris felt that the description of creation as being 'good' but not 'perfect' was a helpful insight.

Dr Abuom, closing the discussion, again thanked the presenters, and also the staff and colleagues who had prepared the presentations.

Revd Arne Fritzson, in a closing liturgical act, invited Central Committee members to identify signs of frustration around them for people with disabilities in their society and signs of hope, and to write one example of each on the pieces of paper before them. The papers were gathered together and incorporated into a sign of the cross, which was raised. Mr Fritzson read the text, 'Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good' (Gen. 50:20) and declared that the cross is the sign that God can change signs of frustration into signs of hope. He concluded the session with prayer.

18. PLENARY ON CARING FOR LIFE: LATIN AMERICA

Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen, presiding, welcomed members to the Plenary on Caring for Life with a focus on Latin America. Those contributing to the plenary came from different countries, spoke different languages and faced different challenges, but all had made an option for life and were one in their commitment within this much loved ecumenical community.

After thirty years the people of Latin America were still suffering the effects of the military regimes, which had tortured and caused to disappear thousands of people, including children. They were still bearing the burden of foreign debt, the cost of which was hunger and poverty. In this session we would receive testimonies, engage in Bible study, hear music and again commit ourselves to life.

Revd Cibebe Kuss described her work with the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in the city of Belem in the State of Para in Brazil. Para, in Amazonia, was the second largest state in Brazil, and men, women and youth in the churches there were working against oppression, standing up against the inhuman development of Amazonia and resisting human rights violations. Features of the present situation were increasing conservatism in church and society and social exclusion, with the concentration of land and wealth in the hands of a minority. Occupations of land by landless peasants had resulted in some being killed. Nevertheless, with injustice surrounding them, life continued. Pointing to children, she declared that they were not only victims: they wanted to enjoy life and were a sign of hope for the future.

Mr Gerald Green described the work of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua. Established in 1849 by German missionaries, it had

become independent in 1974 and had its head office in Puerto Cabezas. It was rooted in the life of the people, ministered to a multi-ethnic community, and was engaged in pastoral care, evangelism, primary and secondary education, theological education, social work and health. The Sandinista regime, coming to power in 1979, in a bid to stop incursions, had relocated peasants into model villages and destroyed traditional communities. Immersed in this social conflict, the church had created committees of pastors for peace and had become an agent for peace, justice and reconciliation. They had rebuilt villages and communities and thus given a powerful witness to life.

Bishop Etchegoyen thanked the two speakers and introduced two musicians who played Latin American music at various points in the course of the plenary.

Revd Dr Tania Mara Vieira Sampaio gave a Bible study on Song of Songs, Mark 10 and Isaiah 32: 15-20. She demonstrated the Latin American method of popular reading of the Bible: taking the Bible and with its perspective looking around oneself and seeing one's experiences of God in one's surrounding world. These passages spoke to us of the dignity of life.

Isaiah 32: 17 spoke of peace as the fruit of justice, not only between individuals, but also between communities, and all in the context of a renewed creation. Such a reading of the text led us away from a view of creation as dominated by humankind to another dynamic of life.

In Song of Songs 1: 5-7, the woman made a strong affirmation of her own body as beautiful: 'I am black and beautiful.' At this point Dr Vieira Sampaio invited her hearers to get out a mirror and look at

themselves, not hastily as just before going out, but truly contemplating themselves and appreciating their own beauty. It was through our bodily awareness that experience of God could come to us.

Referring to Leviticus 15:1-5, which deals with bodily discharges, she saw it as indicating a society where people and their bodies were controlled by a male-dominated hierarchical religion, based on the temple and reinforced by regulations and a sacrificial system. Food, relationships and work, indeed the whole of life was regulated and sacrifice was necessary to ensure purification and God's blessing. By contrast, the Song of Songs spoke of the blessing of the body independently of religious structures.

Jesus acted outside these control systems. He healed people in the street, not in the temple through a sacrificial system. He changed relationships, and with him healing came through restored relationships in daily life in all its normality.

She drew attention to the bodily awareness of Jesus. This could be seen in his use of his eyes in Mark 10: when he saw children being rejected, he was indignant (v.14); he looked at the rich young man in love (v.21); he looked at his disciples (v.27).

In Mark 10:30, it was remarkable that, among what the disciples receive back, fathers are not included, despite their being included in what they give up in v.29. This was because in the community of disciples there was no longer any patriarchal hierarchy (v.31). Jesus abolished such hierarchy.

Similarly, at the end of Mark 10, Jesus' ears were sensitive to the cry of blind Bartimaeus, despite the surrounding hubbub; and in Mark 5

his body was sensitive to the touch of the woman suffering from bleeding, even though they were in the midst of a crowd.

For ourselves, we needed to replace hierarchies of gender, race or belief with networks and seek the justice that leads to peace. Many people refused to get involved in a process of no benefit to them, but we were called to do things of no benefit to ourselves, to sow seeds for future generations.

Bishop Federico Pagura summed up the session. He began by referring to a recent consultation in Buenos Aires on the situation in Latin America organized with WCC support, by the Latin American Council of Churches. The consultation had reviewed the situation in Latin America, where 10% of the population lived in extreme poverty. Every minute people were dying, due to the decline in health care and in the care of women, children and the elderly in particular. In the days of the Cold War with its nuclear threat a Latin American had once said to a European, 'You in Europe are afraid of dying: but we in Latin America are dying.' The Cold War threat had disappeared, but a destructive system persisted in Latin America as a disastrous consequence of the former military dictatorships. It was a form of economic neo-colonialism presided over by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The consultation had produced a message to the churches of Latin America and the Caribbean under the title 'Enough is Enough'. That was one of the signs of hope he saw in Latin America. Quoting Isaiah 21:11-12, 'Watchman, what of the night?' he was able to respond, 'Morning is coming.' We could see God's Spirit being poured out in fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, as, for example, in the prophetic action of the young people in Changemaker in Norway.

Our dreams were reviving, inspiring us to accompany young people, not only by prayer, but also by going with them on their marches.

In conclusion, Bishop Pagura pointed out that Porto Alegre had been the location of the World Social Forum in January 2003 on the theme 'A different world is possible'. It would also be the setting for the WCC Assembly in 2006. That would be a great opportunity for us to share together in our God-given task of changing history.

Bishop Etchegoyen invited members to reflect together at their tables on what they had heard. After further Latin American music, he invited responses from the floor.

Mrs Inger Aasa-Marklund was grateful for the contributions and felt that the Council was already beginning its journey to Porto Alegre. She was, however, concerned that no mention had been made of the situation in Guatemala, often described as 'the land of eternal spring, the land of eternal tyranny'. There was ongoing structural violence, continuing human rights violations, threats directed at human rights workers, tortures and killings. Guatemala should not be forgotten.

Revd Dr Angelique Walker-Smith was also grateful. There was much Latin American immigration into the USA via Mexico, and in the USA there was much racial harassment and inhospitality to people from Latin America. We needed to understand why they came and accompany them when they came. She hoped that the Porto Alegre Assembly would provide an opportunity to build bridges between North America, especially the USA with its large Hispanic community, and Latin America.

Bishop Etchegoyen thanked all who had contributed to the plenary and the session closed with further Latin American music.

19. EVALUATION OF THE MEETING

In a short period before the Closing Actions, the Moderator invited comments of evaluation of the present meeting.

Many comments of appreciation were made: to the General Secretary, the stewards, the worship organizers and leaders and to many others, particularly those who had been invisibly active behind the scenes. Particular appreciation was expressed of the three 'Caring for Life' plenary sessions and of the smooth way in which the election of the General Secretary had been conducted.

A concern was expressed that some world regions, such as the Pacific and the Caribbean, were less well known and represented than others in the life of the WCC. It was important to strengthen our solidarity with any such regions.

Several members expressed disappointment at levels of attendance. Some members had left early or had sent apologies for absence but had not proposed substitutes; some had not attended the sub-committees to which they had been allocated.

Expectations surrounded the coming Porto Alegre Assembly and the hope was expressed that the next Central Committee meeting, the last before the Assembly, should include an introduction, not only to the Assembly, but also to its setting in Porto Alegre, Brazil and Latin America.

20. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Executive Committee	17-20 February 2004
Executive Committee	24-27 August 2004 (no Central Committee)
Executive Committee	13-14 February 2005
Central Committee	15-22 February 2005
Executive Committee	13-16 September 2005
Ninth Assembly	14-23 February 2006

21. CLOSING ACTIONS

The Moderator, summing up prior to closing the meeting, said that it had been fruitful and enjoyable and thanked all for their active participation. He then, on behalf of the Officers, expressed particular thanks and appreciation to:

- members of the Central Committee for their active participation and commitment to the deliberations and actions of the meeting;
- all those who had attended the meeting in various capacities for their participation;
- The vice-moderators for moderating some of the plenary sessions and those who moderated during deliberative sessions;
- the moderators, vice-moderators and those who served on committees and in the Hearings;
- To the Deputy General Secretary, Georges Lemopoulos and the Executive Secretary in the General Secretariat, Sabine Udodesku, for their help in preparations for this meeting of the Central Committee.

He added a particular word of appreciation to Konrad Raiser. While he would soon be leaving as General Secretary, he would remain

part of our fellowship. All deeply appreciated his impact-making contribution to the ecumenical movement and especially the World Council of Churches.

The Officers of the World Council of Churches subsequently expressed their appreciation in the following minute:

When re-entering the ecumenical scene as General Secretary in 1992 Konrad Raiser had the strong conviction that the ecumenical movement was in transition and needed orientation and re-articulation of its vision. He did his best as General Secretary to contribute to the Council's continuing efforts to respond realistically, faithfully and responsibly to changing situations and emerging new realities. He was the leading force in all major initiatives and processes that have marked the ecumenical witness of the Council during the last decade.

Indeed, with his broad knowledge, perceptive and analytical mind and firm commitment, Konrad Raiser will remain an important point of reference and a source of inspiration for the ecumenical generations to come. The ecumenical movement needs people who have the courage to respond faithfully to the imperative of the Gospel message and to the new challenges and the needs of our times. Therefore, the officers greatly appreciate the promise made by Dr. Raiser in his last report to CC that his ecumenical commitment would not end when he was leaving the position of General Secretary.

We give thanks to God for the life and ministry of Konrad Raiser and Dr Elisabeth Raiser, for accompanying him as wife and partner, and for serving in her own turn, the ecumenical course. May God bless both of them and their family!

The Moderator also added a word of welcome to Samuel Kobia as General Secretary and said that he looked forward to working closely with him.

The General Secretary expressed his thanks for the Moderator's kind words and for his leadership in the present meeting. He further expressed his thanks for the wonderful farewell celebration, both the worship service in the chapel and the gathering at Bossey, for Elisabeth and himself on the previous Sunday. He felt that the present meeting had been most productive and marked by a positive spirit, and thanked all those who had contributed to its success, including:

- the Conference Secretary Gerard Scarff;
- the team of stewards under the staff leadership of Freddy Knutsen;
- the interpreters and the translators, co-ordinated by Jane Stranz;
- the computer pool, co-ordinated by Monika Grob and Wenona Arndt;
- Simone Ergas, responsible for the documents office;
- Computer service, co-ordinated by Catherine Inoubli;
- administrative staff at the registration/information desk and in the committees: Brigitte Constant, Ursula Zierl, Claudie Perez, Catherine Christ-Taha, Luzia Wehrle;
- Yasmina Lebouachera-Visinand in the cash office;
- Heather Stunt and Rozmi Pahlisch in the WCC bookshop;
- Peter Williams, responsible for photo distribution;
- Jean-Nicolas Bazin and Michiel Hardon, plenary hall managers;
- Tony Coates for writing the minutes;
- the worship committee, co-ordinated by Simeu Monteiro and Hannelore Schmidt;
- the communication staff for contact with the media;

- all the other staff for their attention to the needs of the members of Central Committee.

The Moderator closed the fifty-third meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at 12.15 hrs on 2 September 2003.

A closing act of worship followed in the conference hall.

PARTICIPANTS

PRESIDIUM

Dr Agnes Abuom, Anglican Church of Kenya

Right Revd Jabez L. Bryce, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynēsia

H.E. Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Dr Moon Kyu Kang, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

Obispo Federico J. Pagura, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina

Bischof Eberhardt Renz, EKD-Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg

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His Holiness Aram I, Armenian Apostolic Church (Cilicia)

Vice-Moderators

Mrs Justice Sophia O.A. Adinyira, Church of the Province of West Africa

Dr Marion S. Best, United Church of Canada

General Secretary

Revd Dr Konrad Raiser, Evangelical Church in Germany

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Ms Inger Aasa-Marklund, Church of Sweden

H.G. Bishop Georges Abou Zakhm, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Ms Martha Aisi, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea

H.G. Bishop Dr Hilarion Alfeyev, Russian Orthodox Church

H.E. Metropolitan Ambrosios of Kalavryta and Aigealia, Church of Greece

H.E. Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki, Orthodox Church of Finland

H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, Kisha Orthodhokse Autoqefale e Shqipërisë

Mme Jeannette A. Aneye, Eglise protestante méthodiste de Côte d'Ivoire

H.E. Metropolitan Athanasios Papas of Heliopolis and Theira, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Mr Victor Avasi, Church of the Province of Uganda

Bishop Samuel R. Azariah, Church of Pakistan

Mme Louise Bakala Koumouno, Eglise évangélique du Congo

Revd Canon Dr Trond Bakkevig, Church of Norway

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Revd Ruth Anne Bottoms, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Revd Avedis Boynerian, Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East

Ms Selai Cati, Kiribati Protestant Church

Revd Dr Simão Chamango, Igreja Presbiteriana de Moçambique

Revd Fr Vsevolod Chaplin, Russian Orthodox Church

Ms Iulia Corduneanu, Romanian Orthodox Church

Ms Lois Dauway, United Methodist Church

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 Ms Esther Malwine Edu-Yao, Evangelical Presbyterian Church,
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 Ms Donnalie Edwards-Cabey, Church in the Province of the West
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 Sra Manuela Fuentes de Capó, Iglesia Evangélica Española
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 Prof. George Galitis, Church of Greece
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 Ms Silva Ghazelian, Armenian Apostolic Church
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 and All the East
 Eden Grace, Religious Society of Friends - Friends United Meeting
 Revd Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Reformed Church in America
 Mr Gerald Green, Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua
 Dr Richard A. Grounds, United Methodist Church
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 Ms Makiko Hirata, United Church of Christ in Japan
 Revd Wies L. J. Houweling, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Mr Rasmus Hylleberg, Baptistkirken i Danmark
 Mr Wilhelm Harold Jap-A-Joe, Moravian Church in Suriname
 Ms Muna Kallas Malek, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch
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Msgr John A. Radano, Pontifical Council for Promoting
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A CHURCH OF ALL AND FOR ALL
An interim statement

Introduction

As the author of the letter to the Ephesians stressed: Christ came to tear down the walls (Eph 2:14). Whenever we consider the ways in which to respond to issues of disability, we do well to remember the walls that we have set up. All of these walls are so human, yet they contradict Christ's ministry of reconciliation; walls that shut people in or shut people out; walls that prevent people from meeting and talking to others. In days gone by, people with disabilities were actually kept behind walls, inside institutions. Now we are all a part of mainstream society. It is estimated that some 600 million people are persons with disabilities. Yet people, especially persons with disabilities, still find themselves isolated. Now there are walls of shame; walls of prejudice; walls of hatred; walls of competition; walls of fear; walls of ignorance; walls of theological prejudice and cultural misunderstanding. The Church is called to be an inclusive community, to tear down the walls. This interim statement is an invitation to journey towards making that more of a reality. It has been written by disabled people, parents and others who experience life alongside them in various ways.

Historically, disability has been interpreted as loss, as something that illustrates the human tragedy. The stories in the gospels about how Jesus healed persons with different diseases and disabilities are traditionally interpreted as acts of liberation, stories of how human beings receive possibilities to live a richer life. From that time, churches have often wrestled with how best to exercise an appropriate ministry for, to and with persons with disabilities.

The ecumenical movement also found itself faced with the necessity of addressing the issue. After the fourth assembly of the World Council of

Churches in 1968, the theme “The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Humankind” emerged as a means of relating issues of church and society. At the assembly and subsequently, the attempt to explore the church as a more inclusive community intensified. A concern to address the inclusion of handicapped people in the church emerged within the Faith and Order Commission, and gathered momentum at the Louvain meeting of the Commission in 1971. This first attempt to address the situation of persons with disabilities was a theological examination of service for the disabled in the light of the compassion of Christ.

In the period which followed, concern with persons with disabilities moved from theological reflection to practical questions of inclusiveness within churches and church communities. But often, this reflection and action in the churches treated “persons with handicaps” and “the differently-abled” and “persons with a disability” (all those terms were designed to reflect inclusiveness and each replaced the other) as **objects** rather than subjects of reflection. The appearance of EDAN (Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network), founded at the WCCs 1998 assembly, and its assimilation within the WCC structures within the JPC team has itself come to be a sign of hope in the process of conscientization of Christian churches and institutions, because now persons with disabilities are themselves the **subjects** or actors of reflection or action. EDAN works in the eight regions of the world and serves as a network of encounter and support as persons with disabilities seek to address the specific issues and challenges in their own contexts.

However, there has been a growing awareness in some churches that persons with disabilities invite the Church to explore anew the understanding of the Gospel and the nature of the Church. This awareness was evident in a first interim statement at the 1997 Central Committee of the WCC which sought to reflect theologically and engage the churches in acting to be more inclusive communities. This new Interim Statement, conducted with participation from the Faith and Order Commission, is thus a stage on a continuing journey. It is not comprehensive but offers pointers and insights on major theological themes. It is hoped that the

statement will also enable the churches to interact with the disability discourse and help the churches address inclusion, active participation and full involvement in the spiritual and social life of the church in particular and society in general.

Persons with disabilities – commonalities and differences

1. “*The disabled*” have struggled hard to become recognised as “*disabled people*”. The fight was worthwhile for two reasons. First, throughout history, disabled people have been de-personalised and perceived as a problem to be dealt with. Second, they are often seen as a homogeneous group whose individual differences do not need to be respected. This section is about who we are, our common experience. Its purpose is to make the point that, in common with all groups in society, we too are very diverse and have different stories. We also want to explore a possible framework to help disabled people and the churches to find a common starting point from which to begin this exploration.

2. We have probably all experienced limitations; in how we move, feel, think, perceive. Due to our impairments and resultant disabilities, we have been marginalized by the attitudes, actions or barriers in society. In many societies, persons with disabilities have organised themselves into powerful lobby groups which advocate against such marginalization and for disability rights and independence, even from their familial carers. Yet one of the hardest challenges facing many carers¹ is to maintain the voice of the voiceless when those for whom they care often have such profound and multiple disabilities that their silence is only understood in the depth of the loving relationship of care.

1 In the UK, the term “carers” denotes people who offer care because of an emotional bond usually for little or no financial recompense. There are, in fact, national associations of carers which offer mutual support and encouragement. Professional care-givers are distinguished by a variety of nomenclatures. This may contrast with other cultures which may use terms like familial care-givers etc.

3. Modern society has brought with it many hazards that clearly make humankind collectively responsible for injuries caused by the likes of landmines and substance abuse, but the cause of some disabilities remains inexplicable.

4. Most disabled people are economically disenfranchised and experience some deprivation in their standard of living or employment opportunities. Carers also have to make considerable sacrifices, experiencing significant demands on their time and resources that limit their ability to pursue other activities and careers. Yet, to protest against the economic deprivation of disabled people and their carers in a global context is to grossly underestimate the relativity of poverty between societies and countries. The disparity between the material situation of a disabled person in the economic North and that of a non-disabled person in the economic South (the former may be "better off" than the latter) should not be ignored. Those factors represent the existential bond and reality facing the overwhelming majority of persons with disabilities and their families today.

5. Disability can cause not only economic disenfranchisement but also poverty of relationships and opportunity. Persons with disabilities often become vulnerable to discriminatory social trends. A market economy encourages abortion and the allowing of babies to die. In many countries the systematic abortion of the foetus with certain malformations and those with Down's syndrome give a very negative message of society's view of disability. Such a market economy further leads to institutionalisation and reduced access to adequate medical care for the majority of the world's population. Disabled people become vulnerable to easy commercial fixes and religious groups which offer miraculous healing in the setting of superficial acceptance and friendship.

6. No social group is ever the same, and disabled people are no exception to the rule. We come from a variety of cultures, and are thus culturally conditioned in the same manner as every person. We have experienced different kinds and levels of medical care and differing social attitudes.

We have come to an acceptance of our disabilities by diverse routes. Some of us have been disabled since birth, either by congenital conditions or by the trauma of birth itself, whilst others have been victims of accidents or have had disabilities develop later in life. Each one of us has struggled to accept our disability and has found that we have been accepted or hindered in this acceptance by the quality of medical care or education we have received, or by the attitudes of people who have had an influence in our lives and spiritual well-being. We have been supported by the bonds of different disability cultures such as the uniqueness of sign-language or a particular political understanding of our minority status. We wish to assert that our differences are part of the richness of disabled people as a group, and that we rejoice in them.

7. Those disabled people who share a Christian faith are united by their awareness of God's love and Jesus' compassion for sick and disabled people, and find strength in the care of Christ. However, many have found that the Church's teaching on this truth has been too limited, and have looked for their own understanding. Each one's awareness of how long he/she might expect to live, and their own faith experience have affected how they accept their disabilities. They have relied upon certain theological tools to address their existential need to explain the mystery and paradox of love and suffering, coexisting and giving meaning to their lives.

8. We affirm that God loves all disabled people and extends to all the opportunity to respond to that love. We believe that *every* disabled person has the opportunity to find peace with God.

9. Genesis 32: 24—26

²⁴ *Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.* ²⁵ *When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.* ²⁶ *Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

10. In our wrestling with God, as disabled people we all ask the same basic questions, but the theological enquiry involved may be complex. Why me or my loved one? Is there a purpose to my disability? The answers to those questions can be influenced by the expected time-span of a disability, and by the time and circumstances of its onset. Acceptance or otherwise of a disabling impairment is influenced by knowledge of how long one can expect to live and what quality of life one can expect to experience.

11. We have wrestled with God intellectually and physically to achieve this peace, and whilst some of us have been privileged to write intellectually about it, others have shown it in their innate gift of grace which is shown in the love and affection to those who care for them so deeply. If so many disabled people have this ability to come to terms with God, the Church must surely find ways of accepting the gifts which we have to offer. It is not a case of meeting halfway but of full acceptance.

Hermeneutical issues

12. How can we interpret from a theological perspective the fact that some people live with disabilities? What does that fact tell us about human life in God's world? We have learned from 20th century philosophy and theology that we are historical beings and our interpretations are always made from within history. Our interpretations of reality are always finite because we are finite beings. When we are developing a theological interpretation of the fact of human disabilities, we must acknowledge that history has changed and will change the way we interpret it. And by history, we may mean the story of an individual, or the developing perceptions of the community in which persons with disabilities live.

13. As has been noted above, disability has historically been interpreted as loss, an example of the tragedies that human beings can experience. The Gospel stories about how Jesus heals persons with different diseases and disabilities are traditionally interpreted as illustrating how human beings are liberated and empowered to live a richer life.

14. In this understanding, people with disabilities are seen as weak and needing care. As a result, they are viewed as objects for charity, those who receive what other persons give. Thus, people with disabilities can not meet other people in the churches on equal terms. They are regarded as somehow less than fully human.

15. The church has justified this view from different theological perspectives. For instance, disability has been interpreted as a punishment for sins, either committed by the persons with disabilities themselves or by their relatives in earlier generations. Or disability has been understood as a sign of lack of faith, that prevents God from performing a healing miracle. Or disability has been understood as a sign of demonic activity, in which case exorcism is needed to overcome the disability. Such interpretations have led to the oppression of people with disabilities in the churches. In that respect, the churches' attitudes have reflected attitudes in societies as a whole. Structures of oppression within societies and churches have mutually reinforced each other.

16. When new ways to understand disability have emerged in society, new theological ways to understand this issue have also emerged in the churches and in the ecumenical movement. But the churches have not taken a leading role here. Even though one can find inspiration for such an approach in the Bible, they have not been a prophetic voice against oppression. Rather, churches have generally followed the trends in society, often with distinct reluctance. Conservative structures in the churches, often related to the churches' own charitable institutions, have enforced old ways of interpreting disability. Theological ideas, like that linking disability and divine punishment for sins, remain evident in every part of the world, and disabled persons have been subjected to "pastoral counselling" to address the presumed causes of their "punishment".

17. When new understandings of disabilities emerge in society, traditional theological interpretations are challenged. In some churches, this has raised awareness that people with disabilities were not seen as equal. In

many churches, traditional ways of treating people with disabilities were then perceived as oppressive and discriminatory, and actions towards people with disabilities moved from "charity" to recognition of their human rights. Changing attitudes have led to new questions and interpretations. Awareness has slowly grown that people with disability have experienced that which can enrich the churches themselves. In the search for unity and inclusion, some have acknowledged that people with disability must be included in the life and the witness of the churches. Often, this has been connected to the language about weakness found in the New Testament, especially in the two Epistles to the Corinthians.

18. But even this insight has been challenged. Is disability really something that shows the *weaknesses* in human life? Is that in itself a limiting and oppressive interpretation? Do we not have to take another, more radical step? Is disability really something that is limiting? Is the language of disability as a "loss" an adequate one at all, despite it being a stage of the journey undertaken by persons with disabilities themselves? Is a language of plurality not more adequate? To live with a disability is to live with *other* abilities and limitations that others do not have? All human beings live with limitations. Is not disability something that God has created in order to build a plural, and richer, world? Is not disability a gift from God rather than a limiting condition with which some persons have to live?

19. Such questions need to be taken seriously when we are searching for a new theological understanding of disability. This interim statement is an ongoing process. We will never reach the point where we find "the" theological understanding. We must acknowledge the fact that we will have a different way of raising the theological perspectives tomorrow than today. The main purpose of an interim statement is not to impose one understanding of disability, but to enable us to engage in an ongoing conversation. It is the process in itself that is valuable. It can be liberating both for the churches and people with disabilities.

20. Disability is an human condition and, as such, it is ambiguous. To be human is to live a life that is marked both by the God-given good of creation and the brokenness that is a part of human life. We experience both sides of human life with disabilities. To interpret disability from one of these perspectives is to deny the ambiguity of life and to create an artificial ontological split in the heart of our understanding of disability.

21. We have to let different and conflicting interpretations stand beside each other and let them challenge and correct each other. We should not try to create a syntheses that removes the conflict between the different interpretations. Rather, we should hold on to the tension between them as that which keeps the process going.

Imago Dei

22. In the history of Christian theology, the notion that humanity is made in the image of God has tended to mean that it is the mind or soul which is in God's image, since the bodily (corporeal or physical) aspect of human nature can hardly represent the incorporeal, spiritual reality of the transcendent God. We should not underestimate the profound reaction against idolatry in early Christianity; no animal or human form should be taken to represent God who is invisible. However, the perceived kinship between our minds and God's Mind (or Logos), coupled with the assumed analogy between the incarnation of God's Logos in Christ and the embodiment of the (immortal) soul/mind in the human person, encouraged a predominantly *intellectual* interpretation of how human beings are made in the image of God.

23. This tendency may at times have permitted the positive acceptance of intelligent persons with physical disabilities: e.g., Didymus the Blind (4th century) was nick-named Didymus the See-er because he saw more profoundly than those with physical sight. It has also encouraged positive (if somewhat patronising) responses to persons with profound and multiple disabilities on the grounds that "you can see the soul peeping out through their eyes". But this understanding of human nature is both inherently

elitist and dualist. It ultimately tends to exclude those whose mental or physical incapacities profoundly affect their entire personality and existence.

24. More recently, the notion that humanity is made in the image of God is taken to mean that *each* of us is made in the image of God and, therefore, each of us deserves to be equally respected. It conspires with modern human rights ideologies to encourage individuals to assert their right to a decent deal in society, and to recognition of each person's inherent dignity, no matter what his/her race, religion or impairment.

25. This tendency has had a positive impact in encouraging respect for those who are not white, male, able-bodied and intelligent. But it has also exacerbated the prejudice that we should all be perfect since we are made in God's image. Obvious failure to reach such notional perfection then becomes problematic. How can this person, who apparently has physical or mental defects, be made in God's image? The modernist rights approach may challenge the attitudes of some past traditional societies, but the success-oriented values of modern individualism encourage an interpretation of *imago Dei* which, we would argue, does not take account of core elements in Christian theology.

26. The phrase we are examining occurs in the Genesis narrative of the creation of Adam. So there are two important features that need to be taken seriously: firstly, Adam represents the whole human race. The very name Adam means man-humanity in the generic sense, for the creation of Eve from his rib represents sexual differentiation in the human race. Secondly, while Adam was indeed made in the image and likeness of God, this was marred by his disobedience, classically known as the Fall. Some early theologians suggested that he retained the image but lost the likeness. The point here is that glib theological talk about being made in God's image needs to be countered with a sensitivity to the *corporate* nature of that image, and the fact that *all* have fallen short of the glory (image) of God (Rom 3:23).

27. For the Christian community, this reflection on Genesis 1 is confirmed by the New Testament. A reading of Paul's Epistles soon shows that the dynamic of salvation depends upon the parallel between Adam and Christ. Adam is the "old man", Christ the "new man" (Rom 5:2, 2 Cor 5:17), and all of us (male and female) are in Adam and potentially in Christ (Romans 7, 1 Cor 15:22). Both are in some sense corporate figures. In Christ we are a new creation, but as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. In a sense, Christ alone is the true image of God; the image of God in Adam (the old humanity) was marred. So we are in God's image because we are in Christ.

28. If Christ is the true image of God, then radical questions have to be asked about the nature of the God who is imaged. At the heart of Christian theology is a critique of success, power, and perfection, and an honouring of weakness, brokenness and vulnerability.

29. Being in Christ is being in the Body of Christ. This is essentially a corporate image; a body is made up of many members, all of whom bring different contributions to the whole (1 Cor 12, Romans 12). Indeed, the weak limbs (members), and even those body parts we are ashamed of and cover up (see the Greek of 1 Cor 12:23), are indispensable and are to be especially honoured, their essential contribution recognised. Furthermore, this is a physical image, and the physical reality was that in His bodily existence, Christ was abused, disabled, and put to death. Some aspects of God's image in Christ can only be reflected in the Church as the Body of Christ by the full inclusion and honouring of those who have bodies that are likewise impaired.

30. We would therefore argue that:

Christian theology needs to interpret the *imago Dei* from a Christological and soteriological (the saving work of Christ for the world) stand-point, which takes us beyond the usual creationist and anthropological perspectives.

Christian theology needs to embrace a non-elitist, inclusive understanding of the Body of Christ as the paradigm for understanding the imago Dei.

Without the full incorporation of persons who can contribute from the experience of disability, the Church falls short of the glory of God, and cannot claim to be in the image of God.

Without the insight of those who have experience of disability, some of the most profound and distinctive elements of Christian theology are easily corrupted or lost.

31. *“When any one of us, or a group of us, is excluded because of some lack of ability, we are prevented from using our God-given gifts to make Christ’s body complete. Together, let us make the beautiful mosaic that God intends.”* (Norma Mengel on mental illness)

32. The study of the Bible as the source of Christian theological reflection and as the revelation of the purpose of God, and the knowledge of the Creator, leads us to the certainty that we have accepted and been accepted by a God of Love. It is God who encourages us to live in the light of his Son with our errors, afflictions and disabilities. The prophet Isaiah points to the One who carries all our afflictions (Is 53:4-6). The God “who shows no partiality” (Gal 2:6), includes everyone in His bosom, male or female, whatever their physical or mental conditions.

Disabilities and healing

33. However, the Scriptures speak not only of the God who identifies Himself with human affliction, but also the One who exercised a ministry of healing and wholeness. How does this relate to the continuing witness of persons with disabilities? We cannot deal with the relationship between healing and disability without asking the following questions: What does it mean to talk about the image of God in relation to persons with disability? If the image is described as “perfect body”, or “perfect reason”, how can persons with disability embrace such an image of God? What is the

relationship between our theological language and practice with regards to the issue of disability? How much of the medical and social language which treats persons with disability as objects determines both academic theologies and general attitudes about and towards persons with disability as objects of pity, forgiveness and healing? How far do we have a wholistic understanding of healing which integrates the moral, spiritual and the physical? Furthermore, we want to raise questions about what it means to call the Church the body of Christ. Can persons who are visually impaired or who have a body with cerebral palsy be included? Although many Christians consciously deny any relationship between disability and sin (which also includes suffering), some of their attitudes seem to reflect such a link.

34. *“Wherefore, when we now attempt to speak of that image, we speak of a thing unknown; an image which we not only have never experienced all our lives, and experience still. Of this image, therefore, all we now possess are mere terms — the image of God!.... But there was, in Adam, an illumined reason, a true knowledge of God and a will the most upright to love both God, and his neighbour.”* (Luther)

35. From a disability perspective of a hermeneutic of suspicion, it is obvious that persons with some form of disability cannot accept the image of God defined thus. For example, persons with some form of mental disability or some form of learning disability will be disqualified as human beings because they will not reflect the definition of the image of God as soul, as reason or as rationality. A hermeneutic of suspicion cannot accept the image of God or soul as reason or rationality. It is also obvious that these interpretations of the image of God or soul as rationality are inconsistent with other world-views, e.g. African.

36. Traditional definitions of healing, wholeness and holiness (based on a particular theological anthropology of God, the image of God, and the body of Christ which, in turn, is based on cultural images of beauty and perfection with regard to the image of God and the body of Christ) are extremely unhelpful, especially during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Such theologies sometimes treat healing as metaphor in very exclusive and victimising ways to persons with disabilities.

37. In the case of disability, it is often assumed that healing is either to eradicate the problem as if it were a contagious virus, or that it promotes virtuous suffering, or a means to induce greater faith in God. Such theological approaches to healing either emphasise “cure” or “acceptance” of a condition.

38. Other definitions of healing make a clear theological distinction between healing and curing. Healing refers to the removal of oppressive systems, whereas curing has to do with the physiological reconstruction of the physical body. For some theologians, Jesus’ ministry was one of healing and not curing.

39. In this kind of theology, disability is a social construct, and healing is the removal of social barriers. From these perspectives, the healing stories in the gospels are primarily concerned with restoration of the persons to their communities, not the cure of their physiological conditions. For example, the man with leprosy in Mark 1:40-45 who asks Jesus to make him clean is mainly asking Jesus to restore him to his community. In like manner, in Mark 2:1-12, Jesus met the paralytic and forgave him his sins.

40. Forgiving sins here means removing the stigma imposed on him by a culture in which disabilities were associated with sin. Hence this man was ostracised as sinful and unworthy of his society’s acceptance. In these healing stories Jesus is primarily removing societal barriers in order to create accessible and accepting communities.

41. The good news of the Gospel from this perspective is that it creates inclusive communities by challenging oppressive and dehumanising systems and structures. Africans, for example, might argue that theologians who pursue this line of exploration are engaging in theological reductionism of healing from a scientific viewpoint. A western scientific world-view might argue that the medical conditions described in the

biblical narratives could not be physiologically cured by divine intervention. Some theologians would even argue that the dispensation of such types of healing ended with the advent of western scientific medicine.

42. It must be noted that Jesus did not make a distinction between social restoration and physical healing. Both always happened at any given time of healing. Consequently, the integral relationship of health, salvation and healing is an imperative for a holistic theological interpretation of disability. That requires a different theological discourse on the body of Christ and the image of God from the perspectives of persons with disability.

43. The biblical healing narratives are important bases for a theological hermeneutic of disability. However, one must try to engage in such an investigation without falling into another theological pitfall: what Nancy Lane calls “victim theology”. Victim theologies tend to either blame persons for their lack of faith, which accounts for their disabilities not being healed; accuse persons of possessing demons, which must be exorcised; say that through the sufferings of persons with disability, God shows forth God’s glory and power; or blame disability on either the sins of parents or of disabled people themselves.

44. Victim theologies “.... place the burden for healing on the person who is disabled, causing further suffering and continued alienation from faith communities.” (Lane)

45. For persons with disability, the relationship between healing and disability is both ambivalent and ambiguous. While for other theologians, there is an obvious definition of healing evident in the Bible, for persons with disability, healing is tentative, relative, ambivalent, ambiguous, and ongoing. Healing can bring joy and relief. It can also bring pain, frustration, and serious theological questions.

46. A straightjacket understanding of healing in general and the biblical healing narratives in particular makes discussion of healing in relation to

disability very difficult. It is obvious that the main danger to avoid is to treat healing, especially healing with respect to disability, to justify our favourable notion of healing without any reference to the totality of the *raison d'être* of Christian theology. To discuss healing either from socio-economic emancipation or physical body reparation perspectives, or from psychological/spiritual perspectives is to engage in distracting and speculative arguments as to the kind of healing Jesus carried out and why.

47. A theological statement of healing with respect to disability needs to be made with reference to the *history of salvation*. Salvation history is here defined as the self-revelation of God then, now, and in the future through events and acts through which God transforms, empowers, renews, reconciles, and liberates God's creation and everything therein made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. Such a theology is evident in Holy Scripture.

48. It is against the background of salvation history that a definition of healing from the perspective of disability is attempted. But there is also a need to give a working definition of disability, based on which healing is also defined. In Gen 1:25b, God pronounced creation as good. It was good, for God has enacted salvation history in creation in which God will continue to transform, renew, reconcile, and liberate creation. God's creating and saving acts are concurrent. An illustration with the body will help to make this point clear. When we are well, there is within the body provision of antibodies to prevent illness as well as to produce more antibodies to fight viruses and bacteria that will make us sick.

49. Disability in this theological understanding is a negation of God's intention for his creation to be good. Disability in all its forms and causes is a negation of God's good intention. Similarly, all negative attitudes, systems and structures that exclude and prevent or contribute in any way to the exclusion of persons with disability do not actualise God's intended good of God's creation.

50. Healing then is an act, event, system, and structure which encourages, facilitates God's empowering, renewing, reconciling, and liberating processes in order to reverse the negation of God's intended good for God's creation. Therefore, the overall theological contribution of the healing narratives in the New Testament is to demonstrate or serve as signs of God's salvation history. God wills the acceptance and inclusion of each in a community of interdependence where each supports and builds up the other, and where each lives life to the full according to their circumstances and to the glory of God.

Each human being a gift

51. All life is a gift from God, and there is an integrity to this creation. We read in Genesis (1:31) that after creating all of heaven and earth and every form of life, God saw that "... indeed, it was very good." God did not say it was "perfect". With the breath of life, God has imbued each person with dignity and worth. We believe that humanity is "created in the image and likeness of God," (Gen 1:26) with each human bearing aspects of that divine nature yet no one of us reflecting God fully or completely. Being in God's image does not just mean bearing this likeness, but the possibility of becoming as God intends.

52. This includes all people, whatever their abilities or impairments. It means that every human being is innately gifted and has something to offer that others need. This may be simply one's presence, one's capacity to respond to attention, to exhibit some sign of appreciation, and love for other people. Each has something unique to contribute (1 Cor 12:12-27) and should thus be considered as a gift. We cannot speak about this "giftedness" without also speaking about each person's limitations. They are the basis of our need of each other and of God, irrespective of the labelling of our abilities. Living in this interdependence opens us to one another and to a deeper, more honest, self-knowledge, and so makes us each more fully human, more fully people of communion, more fully realising the *Imago Dei* we bear.

53. Besides the innate gifts of relationship that are inherent in each person, most people with disabilities have other gifts to contribute to the life of the community and church. These are as varied as the many different parts of the human body, but all are necessary to the whole. They include natural abilities in perception and movement; talents and skills developed through education and training in areas such as academic disciplines, religion, science, business, athletics, technology, medicine, and the arts. While many gifts are brought to fruition throughout an individual's lifetime, some may never be realised due to circumstances, including the presence of disability. We need one another for our gifts to be revealed. A person who has suffered rejection or has been devalued may not show or share many of her own gifts or his own contribution to humanity, unless he/she is shown full acceptance and unconditional love. In our relationships, it is our task to call out the gifts of each other so that each person's potential may be realised and God may be glorified.

54. Individuals with disabilities, as well as their families, friends and carers/care-givers, may also have gifts to share that have emerged precisely from the experience of living with disability. Individuals with disabilities know what it is to have one's life turned upside-down by the unexpected. We have found ourselves in that liminal space between what is known and what is yet unknown, able only to listen and wait. We have faced fear and death and know our own vulnerability. We have met God in that empty darkness, where we realised we were no longer "in control" and learned to rely on God's presence and care. We have learned to accept graciously and to give graciously, to be appreciative of the present moment. We have learned to negotiate a new terrain, a new way of life that is unfamiliar. We have learned to be adaptable and innovative, to use our imaginations to solve new problems. We can be resilient. We know what it is to live with ambiguity and in the midst of paradox, that simplistic answers and certitudes do not sustain us. We have become skilful in areas we never expected to master. We have become accidental experts with skills and expertise to share with the wider community and church.

55. While people with disabilities are endowed *with* gifts, we are also called to *be* a gift, to give ourselves to God's service. God wants our whole being, for us to give all of ourselves, to hold nothing back. That includes the disability (the impairment). It is not something of which to be ashamed or to be kept hidden at all cost. For a disabled person, the impairment is one attribute of who he/she is, and is to be included as part of the "holy and acceptable" offering of the self. However, just as it would be wrong to deny the reality of disability as part of our lives, it is also wrong to attribute more honour and recognition to a person's contributions just because he or she also happens to have a disability.

Challenges to theology

56. The part of this statement that dealt with a theological understanding said no to any reductionist tendencies in our way of interpreting stories about healing miracles in the Gospels. It challenged us to make our theological understanding so broad, so spacious, that it could take into account every aspect of human life in relation to Christ's saving grace. Jesus came that we should have life and have it abundantly, (John 1:10) and in Him all things will be united (Eph 1:10). This vision of unity in Jesus Christ challenges us to say no to every form of reductionism and to view life in its full richness and complexity. All theology is *theologia viatorum*, a theology of the road, and that is why this statement can only be an interim statement. In relation to disability, theology is challenged to talk about God, faith and life in a way open to a God's future; that can surprise us all, and unite and transcend every human existence. A theological understanding of disability has to interpret this issue in the context of the *unfinished* history of God's salvation.

57. People with disabilities, and particularly people with learning disabilities, disturb and confuse the accepted order in many societies. Disabled people disturb human notions of perfection, purpose, reward, success and status; they also disturb notions of a God who rewards virtue with health and prosperity. The responses to this disturbance can be pity as expressed by charitable works, or banishment (putting people away out

of sight and mind), and/or fear. Whatever the basis of the response, disabled people are given no meaningful place in society.

58. The presence of disability in our lives directly challenges fundamental assumptions and stereotypes acquired over time. We often cloak the reality of disability in a shroud of silence, or respond with demeaning pity, ridicule or hate. The way we respond to persons with disabilities is essential to the message of the Cross.

59. As Christians, we worship a God who became flesh and hung motionless and utterly incapacitated on the Cross. Ours is a God of vulnerability and woundedness. Yet often, we choose to forego or forget the crucifixion, preferring to turn directly to the resurrection. Christ rose from the dead with His wounds. We too discover Him in our wounds, and we discern His presence in our vulnerability and in our courage to live the lives we have been given.

60. For us Christians, the Cross of Jesus Christ is a symbol of life. When the Word became flesh (John 1:14), it was the broken flesh of humanity that was assumed. Even when Christ rose from the dead, He did so *with* the wounds that He suffered on the Cross (Luke 24:36-39). And, when St Paul confessed his own thorn in the flesh, he received the revelation that God's strength is perfected in weakness (2 Cor 12:7-8). Indeed, long before any of the Gospel miracles of healing, perhaps the earliest account of God's word being heard through disability is the example of Moses' speech impairment in Exodus (4:10-17). Here is an example of a person with a particular disability being chosen by God - not simply in spite of his disability, but *with* his disability - to be a leader among the people of Israel.

61. Finally, at the Last Supper and in our liturgies that recall that event, we repeat the words of Christ holding before us, for the life of the world, His own damaged and disabled body: *Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you.* (cf. Mt 26:26)

62. As Paul asserted: "*we have this treasure in clay pots*" (2 Cor 4:7). The treasure is secreted in human bodies. God took dust, turned it into clay. The breath or spirit of God was contained in the clay vessel. Treasure is secreted in ordinariness, the image of God in ordinary human being. Paul's reference in the previous verse to God's creative word, "Let light shine out of darkness" reinforces the cross-reference to the creation narrative. The treasure is the divine light which has shone in our hearts to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

63. Our ministry to children and adults with disability presents us with more than a chance to serve our neighbour. It presents us with a challenge to our culture where a worldly image (rather than God's image) is a priority, where ideal perfection is valued and weakness criticised, and where virtues alone are emphasised and failures are concealed. Ours is a witness to the centrality and visibility of the Cross in our lives.

64. Another fundamental challenge to theology is the attitude that is challenged by the presence of disability in our lives, is our misguided understanding of forgiveness. Misconceptions of old, often affirmed in the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures and confirmed throughout Christian history, have led us at times to connect disability with shame, sin, or a lack of faith. This is a difficult myth to dispel. When we are tempted to consider disability as punishment or test from God, we need to think differently. When families are weighed down by such feelings imposed on them by cultural attitudes, we must be swift to awaken them and ourselves to the reality taught by Christ. When asked about the man born with blindness, Christ responded:

Neither those with disabilities nor their families have sinned. But the persons who have a disability are born into this world in order that God's works might be revealed in them (John 9:3, paraphrase).

65. Each of us is born the way that we are, with the gifts that we each have, as well as with our inadequacies, in order that God's works might be revealed in us. When we think of forgiveness, we most often think of guilt

and redemption. Yet the contemporary Greek word for forgiveness is *synchore-sis*. The word literally means “fitting together” (*syn-chore-sis*), “sharing the same space” or “making space for all people”. Perhaps such an understanding will help us to disassociate disability from sin and guilt.

Struggling with disabled people for their full realisation

66. At the beginning of the 21st century, as was the case before the Christian Era, sectors of the population who are unable to compete or to perform at the levels that society demands are vitiated, despised or, in more contemporary terms, discarded. Among them, we find a high proportion of people with sensorial, motor and mental disabilities.

67. We will find them living in any of the great cities of the world: men and women of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, colours, cultures and religions who, because they have a disability, live in abject poverty, hunger, dependence, preventable disease and maltreatment by those who are “able”.

68. It is the role of the church in this new century to face the reality of humanity in the image of a disabled Jesus; the reality of people with disabilities who are rejected and abandoned.

69. It is painful that the churches throughout the world have not addressed more vigorously the sufferings of marginalized, poor, blind, deaf, and physically and mentally limited people. We do not need pity, or mercy, but compassionate understanding and opportunities to develop their vocations, possibilities and abilities.

70. In their efforts to attain peace, preserve the environment, ensure the equality of women and the rights of the child, care for the aged, churches and Christians should also include the struggle for the full realisation of disabled persons in their agendas. *“Truly I tell you: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however insignificant, you did for me”* (Mt 25:40).

71. Over the past twenty years, positive attitudes towards disability and disabled persons have increased in our churches and Christian institutions. While far from being universal, this is a welcome development.

72. But it is important to be aware that, in some parts of the world and in some churches, there has recently been a return towards overprotection and even disregard of disabled persons. In some places, we have been manipulated by evangelical groups. Even worse being ignored, manipulating disabled people could become the Church's new sin.

Church for all: community

73. Perhaps when Jesus compared the reign of God to a king who prepares a banquet for his elite friends, He was remembering the passage in Isaiah.(Isaiah 25:6-7) Certainly many people who live with disability in themselves or loved ones have at times felt that a pall has been thrown over their lives, that they are considered a disgrace to their communities! In Matthew's account of this story, the king's intended guests are too caught up in their personal affairs to heed his summons. But he does not postpone the banquet. Instead, he invites whoever else who happens to be around at the moment. Jesus did not say God's reign was for a future world; he said, "the kingdom of God is at hand". It is a present reality; respond to it now! It is no longer the elite who are being summoned; rather, the presence of all those who have been ignored, forgotten, and left out is requested. When all are invited to this feast, to this church, the list will include people with physical and mental impairments and chronic illness. How does it affect our worship if, instead of inviting only those whose patterns of behaviour, speech and preferences are known, we extend an open invitation to all? What is the message for our congregations today?

74. The most evident expression of the gathering of the community is the common worship of the congregation. For the liturgy to truly be the work of the people and to accommodate the participation of all the gathered

body in worship, we may need to be reminded of what God said long ago: "Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out," so there is room for everyone (Is 54:2). We may need to re-configure our space, re-imagine how we do liturgy, re-consider the role each person plays. Both the drama of liturgy and the drama of disability deal with the fragility of our lives and our dependence upon God. We need to be able to bring our struggles into our worship so that the symbols of the liturgy will be meaningful to us. Symbolically, this is God's banquet table. Have we made it possible for everyone who so desires to get there, to partake of the feast, and to join the conversation? In this gathered body, will there be a place for each person? To ensure that all can participate in worship means we need to consider how our experience and expression of liturgy engages the whole person; physical movement, senses *and* intellect. People with learning difficulties respond to the integrity of a congregation. They pick up the real and true involvement of those around them, and respond to that devotion.

75. Great significance has been ascribed to words in our teaching and worship, particularly in the Protestant traditions. The "word" of God is an important and vital part of our faith. Bible passages introduce us to people and events, recount the history of God's relationship to humankind, teach us about God's ways, and guide our lives today. The words of sermons, prayers and hymns can stimulate our minds and reach into the depths of our hearts to provoke, inspire or console us. The words we use have the power to create images and define our identities and relationships. Too often, they have *not* sounded tidings of good news or portrayed messages of hope to people with disabilities. Indeed, too often, children and persons with learning difficulties can be excluded from full participation "because they do not understand". They, along with people who are poor, homeless, sick, in prison or struggling with addictions, are often referred to in the third person as "those" in the prayers and texts our churches frequently use. This makes it sound as if these people are not an integral part of the congregation. We need to monitor our patterns of speech that create an "us/them" relationship that casts the disabled person as the outsider, the other.

76. Metaphors can also alienate some of our brothers and sisters. Equating a lack of compassion, an unwillingness to listen, or a lack of resolve to being blind, mentally ill, deaf or paralysed is disparaging and disempowering. By articulating our strengths or identity in terms that disparage persons who live with such physical or mental impairments, we align ourselves against them; we shut them out. Perhaps unintentionally, we project on them what is fearful or negative in ourselves and cast them as the embodiment of evil. The phrase "we are disfigured by sin" from a prayer of confession is an example of this insensitivity. It is doubtful that these words would bring solace to any person living with burn scars or facial deformity. Though we cannot change scripture passages that use such metaphors, we can find other ways to express the messages in our sermons, liturgies, and hymns.

77. All these words and expressions can stimulate thinking and help clarify certain points. But to follow such discourse can be tiresome or confusing for people with little education, short attention spans, cognitive disabilities or other mental impairments. Sometimes people "hear" or comprehend God's Word, and know the mystery and majesty of God's presence in their lives through a sensory experience: perception of light or colour, a picture or sculpture, a whiff of incense, silence, music, dance, a procession, a hug or clasped hands around a circle. This sensory experience in liturgy is important to all of us, but especially to children, elderly people and persons with disabilities. It should be considered in our planning of corporate worship and its setting.

78. Many elements of worship are non-verbal, and we can be more intentional about how we incorporate them to enhance the service for everyone. There is the movement of dance, drama, hands clasped in prayer or raised in blessing, making the sign of the cross, handshakes and hugs, lifting the eyes, bowing the head, offering gifts, and passing the bread and cup. There are tactile elements of anointing, baptism, laying on of hands, foot-washing, touching, and vesting. We can smell the incense, wine, flowers, and candles, and taste the bread and wine or juice. Besides

words, we hear music, clapping, bells, sighs, and breathing. Centuries ago when many did not know how to read or have access to printed material, churches were filled with visual renditions of the Bible stories. There were murals, tapestries, sculpture, icons and stained glass windows. Today, some churches still have many of these visual elements and can also make use of banners, altar hangings, colourful vestments, scarves, flowers, balloons, liturgical dance and drama to portray the messages of our faith.

79. For people who do not hear well, there should be much to see; for those with very little vision, there should be much to hear. Verbal cues from the minister or liturgist are helpful to a person who is blind. Otherwise she may spend all the service trying to figure out when she should be sitting or kneeling or standing. All that needs to be said is, "You may rise," or "You may be seated". For individuals who have difficulty sitting still for very long, there should be opportunities to move. There should always be a place for some to sit even if everyone else is standing for part or all of the service. At a service where the people are seated on the floor or ground, some sort of chair or bench should be provided for people who cannot safely get down or up from such a position. Some people cannot kneel or climb steps safely, so communion needs to be brought to their level. A clear path of travel and sure footing with no stairs is necessary for those unsteady on their feet. In the arrangement of space, people who use wheelchairs need to have seating choices so that they can sit with family and friends as part of the gathered body; they should not be limited to a space way in front or far behind everyone else, or stuck out in an aisle. Several pews can be shortened to make space for wheelchairs.

80. Acoustics will be particularly important for people who are blind or hard of hearing. Individuals with limited sight rely more on their hearing, and those who are hard of hearing need good public address systems to amplify the voice of the preacher or liturgist. Individual assistive listening devices (ALDs) that can be used with and without hearing aids may be particularly useful. Good lighting is crucial for persons with limited vision so they can make optimum use of the sight they do have. It is important

for people who are deaf or hard of hearing that they can see the speaker's lips or the sign-language interpreter. A printed order of worship may be particularly helpful to people with hearing impairments. Copies can easily be produced in large print (size 18 font on a computer or enlarged on a photocopier) for people with limited vision. Large print Bibles are available and music for a service can be enlarged on a photocopier. Overhead projectors and computers can also be used to display print material in a large format for a whole congregation. While only a small percentage of people who are blind know how to read Braille, for those who do, this may be an important way to make the liturgy more accessible. Braille books, including Bibles and hymnals, take up a lot of space, so some congregations keep the pages in loose-leaf binders and remove only the ones needed for a particular service. When the service is over, the pages are put back for use another time.

81. Besides the physical accommodations such as lighting, sound systems and appropriate seating that can make a space accessible to everyone, we need to consider the attitudes and behaviour patterns that can create barriers for people with disabilities or cause some to feel unwelcome or left out. To feel truly welcome in the church, persons with disabilities need to see people like themselves in leadership roles. For people with disabilities to play a larger role, a faith community may need to rethink its policies about who is and who is not allowed to offer welcome, usher, or participate as banner-bearer, to sing in the choir, to read the lessons and lead the prayers of the people. Is the altar area accessible to someone who uses a wheelchair or walker? Can the microphone be adjusted to different heights? Inclusion requires the conviction of the disabled person that he/she has access to leadership according to his/her abilities, attitudes and vocations, setting aside his/her complexes and frustrations.

82. Rigid codes of "acceptable" behaviour may need to be loosened. Just as some people cannot stand or kneel, others cannot sit still for a whole hour or more. They may need to stand or move about because of back pain or muscle spasms or some agitation related to their disability. Some may not be able to understand the "rules" about silence and may mumble

to themselves, speak out when others are quietly listening, or utter exuberant vocalisations at unexpected moments. In these situations, as with people who "make a joyful noise unto the lord" by singing off-key, we can acquire tolerance that acknowledges such behaviour as a mild distraction rather than a great annoyance.

83. The integration of disabled people within the Church gives testimony to God's love as expressed by all His sons and daughters. It can also be an example and an inspiration in those societies in which disabled people suffer from humiliating marginalization.

A Church of all and for all

84. This interim statement has outlined ideals to which every society might wish to aspire. It assumes that with increasing standards of health care, people with disabilities will be so valued, accorded equality with all, cared for in the community and not in institutions or on the margins of economically competitive societies. In such regimes of provision, rehabilitation may be less important than the achievement of a certain quality of life. Such care in the community is very expensive and is, at present, beyond the means of some societies. It may even become unsustainable in political climates which espouse low-tax economies. True care in the community tends to view disabled people in a holistic way, as this statement has attempted to show, but rehabilitation often has to focus on specific problems of impairment thus reinforcing the medical model of disability. Rehabilitation may reduce care costs and offer the possibility of a livelihood and a place in society. The fight for quality and rights tends to be encouraged by those disabled people who have no need of high dependency or who have been enabled by its services to join the articulate pressure groups seeking equality and social justice.

Whether the church is involved in provision of care, rehabilitation, chaplaincy or ministry to or with disabled people, it must recognise the central assumptions of equality and dignity within the Christian message and promote it at the fore all its work.

85. The church is by definition a place and a process of communion, open to and inviting all people without discrimination. It is a place of hospitality and a place of welcome, in the manner that Abraham and Sarah received God's messengers in the Old Testament (Gen. 18). It is an earthly reflection of a divine unity that is at the same time worshipped as Trinity. It is a community of people with different yet complementary gifts. It is a vision of wholeness as well as of healing, of caring and of sharing at once.

Just as the body is one and has many members so it is with Christ.
(1 Cor 12:12)

86. We all accept and proclaim that this is what the church is and stands for. It is the basis of our unity as Christians. Then why is it that, all too often, certain people among us and around us (usually those whom we consider as being unfamiliar or as strangers, as different or perhaps disabled) are marginalized and even excluded? Wherever this happens, even by passive omission, the church is not being what it is called to become. The church is denying its own reality. In the church, we are called to act differently. As St Paul says, the parts of the body which *seem* to be weaker (we should notice that he does not say "*actually are* weaker") are indispensable (1 Cor 12:22).

87. When we think of people with disabilities, too often we tend to think of people who are weak and require our care. Yet, in his epistles, St Paul implies that weakness is not a characteristic of an individual or a particular group, but of the entire church. Disability does not affect only certain individuals, but involves all of us together as the people of God in a broken world. It is our world that is shattered, and each of us comprise one small, fragile, and precious piece. We all hold the treasure of God's life in earthen vessels (cf. 2 Cor 4:7). Yet we hold it; and, what is more, we hold it together. In our attitudes and actions toward one another, at all times, the guiding principle must be the conviction that we are incomplete, we are less than whole, without the gifts and talents of all people. *We are*

not a full community without one another. Responding to and fully including people with disabilities is not an option for the churches of Christ. It is the church's defining characteristic.

88. Interdependence is the key here. Even though the secular world stresses independence, we are called to live as a community dependent on God and on one another. No one of us should be considered a burden for the rest; and no one of us is simply a burden-bearer. "We all bear one another's burdens in order to fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

89. Perhaps it is the starting point in our attitude and in our response that requires redirection at this point. Perhaps we should consider not simply the particular needs, but also the unique gifts of all people in the community. In another passage on the church as the Body of Christ, St Paul writes:

"For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, though we are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another ..."

Every child and every adult, those with disabilities and those without disabilities alike, will bring specific and special gifts and talents to the church. This is the challenge addressed to us all. Thus we can truly be A Church of All and for All - a church which reflects God's intention for humankind.

May we who are made in your image, O God, mirror your compassion, creativity and imagination as we work to reshape our society, our buildings, our programmes, and our worship so that all may participate. In you we are no longer alone, but united in one body. Trusting in your wisdom and grace, we pray gratefully in Jesus' name.

INTERIM REPORT ON CONSENSUS PROCEDURES

1. Following the decision of the Central Committee to move to a consensus method of decision-making a small reference group was formed by the General Secretary in consultation with the Officers. The group began with an analysis of the issues and questions to be addressed in this move, taking into account the report of the Special Commission and in particular its Appendix B. A progress report was presented to the Executive Committee in February 2003. The issue was further discussed at the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Special Commission, in Thessaloniki, 4-7 June.

2. The analysis took the present rules of debate (Rule XVI) as the point of departure. The comparison with the manual in use by the United Church in Australia led to the conclusion that the present distinction of three categories of session, i.e. general, deliberative, and business should be reconsidered and simplified. To provide more room for genuine dialogue and exchange of views on a particular subject it might be advisable to introduce a “hearing” session. Further, it was felt that more clarity was needed about the process of agenda setting and the distribution of items between the different governing bodies. The procedures of the WCC at present provide for the introduction of subjects for discussion and decision in plenary followed by detailed examination and the working out of recommendations in reference committees; most frameworks for consensus decision-making employ small groups to discuss a proposal with results being presented to plenary by a facilitation group. The advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches need to be considered. In addition, the order of speaking calls for review. Finally, clarity is needed whether consensus should be the normal method of decision-making for all items of business, or whether, as proposed by the Special Commission, certain matters should be reserved for voting.

3. Based on the advice and recommendations coming from both the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee of the Special Commission the reference group continued its consultations and is now presenting the following interim report.

I. Aims of the Move to Consensus

A. At its founding in 1948, the majority of the members of the World Council of Churches came from Europe and North America. From the beginning, the WCC rules of governance reflected primarily Western parliamentary procedures as practised by Protestant churches in those parts of the world. With the widening of WCC membership to a truly global fellowship of churches, as well as with the greater participation of women and youth church leaders, across time, many expressed increasing frustration with parliamentary processes. For some years, hopes and expectations have arisen that the methods by which the Council governs its life might more appropriately reflect the changes in the organization that have taken place since its inception.

B. The Eighth Assembly in Harare received the document on The Common Understanding and Vision (CUV) and more clearly defined the WCC as a fellowship of churches seeking together to fulfil their common calling. This included amending the Constitution and Rules. Building on the CUV, the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC recommended, among other changes, that the WCC move to consensus in order to address long-standing concerns of Orthodox churches that, as a numerical minority in various governing bodies, they would continue to encounter substantial difficulties in having their concerns and perspectives heard and addressed. This recommendation resonated deeply with others' convictions that the time for a change to consensus had come.

C. The manner in which churches govern their life together in the World Council of Churches profoundly affects the quality of the fellowship they experience and seek. The means by which churches search for a common mind is as important as the decisions they reach. Processes matter as much

as end products. At its best, the WCC calls churches from various confessional traditions and disparate locations to be in closer relationship to one another, to build each other up within the body of Christ, to listen carefully to one another's traditions and experiences, to intercede on each other's behalf, to speak clearly and dialogue together on common convictions as well as deeply held differences, and thus to grow in faith and in bonds of fellowship. A significant image of the church in the New Testament is that of the Body of Christ, diverse yet one. In I Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul speaks of parts of the body needing each other. A fully functioning body integrates the capabilities and contributions of all the members. A set of procedures that makes the best possible use of the abilities, the history, the experience, the commitment and the spiritual tradition of all the members should be the aim of the WCC.

D. Consensus means seeking the common mind of a meeting without deciding issues by means of voting. A consensus is reached when one of the following occurs :

- all are in agreement (unanimity) ;
- most are in agreement and those who disagree are content that the discussion has been both full and fair and that the proposal expresses the general 'mind of the meeting', the minority therefore gives consent ;
- the meeting acknowledges that there are various opinions, and it is agreed that these be recorded in the body of the proposal (not just the Minutes) ;
- it is agreed that the matter be postponed ;
- it is agreed that no decision can be reached.

E. No governance method is likely to function perfectly or easily at all times. Joy as well as pain will probably continue to be evident on occasion in WCC deliberations as well as in other dimensions of the organization's life. Many desire to move away from parliamentary styles, however, because by their nature, they promote adversarial interactions. Proposals are debated 'for and against,' and exploration of a wider range

of viewpoints often is not possible. The change to consensus reflects the hope that all parties to the dialogue will have parity with one another; minority traditions, small churches, and larger churches alike. The shift attempts to assure that all parties will be empowered to participate more fully. Consensus aims to promote greater openness and honesty in communication as churches address the challenges and opportunities of their commitment to stay together.

F. Consensus should be the norm for all levels of deliberation in the life of the Council, including staff meetings, all sub-groups of governing bodies, the Central Committee, and the Assembly. Consensus should also be the norm for choosing which topics and issues will be discussed as well as how they will be addressed, that is, setting the agenda. Discussions and draft reports should seek to address and accommodate all points of view during the entire process, from beginning to end. Consensus in larger governing bodies is likely to be facilitated when all the sub-groups and committees use the process, that is, when they report outcomes that reflect common convictions where agreement can be reached and the range of opinions where agreement is not possible. Striving to pronounce agreement where it does not exist often inhibits participation and genuine dialogue. Pronouncing agreement where it does exist demonstrates the powerful, common witness of the fellowship.

II. Principles of Governance

A. Any system of governance in the WCC should strive :

- (1) to be as simple as possible and only as complex as is necessary ;
- (2) to be transparent;
- (3) to enhance participation and dialogue across the whole group;
- (4) to check the possibility of domination by any participant or small group;
- (5) to manage with courtesy, respect and grace discussions where participants bring deeply held, contending perspectives on matters at the heart of their Christian convictions;

- (6) to provide orderly deliberations and timely decisions;
- (7) to explore creative alternatives;
- (8) to check the power of a few participants to obstruct decisions when the vast majority is ready to move;
- (9) to check the power of any moderator to steer the deliberations in directions other than those desired by the body;
- (10) to strengthen the capacity of the churches in fellowship in the WCC to engage in common witness and service.

III. Agenda Setting and Distribution of Agenda between the different Governing Bodies

A. When the Special Commission referred to the setting of the agenda of the WCC it was thinking less of the specific agenda for decision-making during a given meeting of a governing body, but much more of the process by which certain issues and themes are included in the working agenda of the WCC. We should, therefore, distinguish between the “programme” and the “business” agenda of the Council. The basic directions for the programmatic activities of the WCC are provided first by the Programme Guidelines Committee of an Assembly and then developed further by the Programme Committee during the period between Assemblies. In addition, efforts have been made through the introduction of the Policy Reference Committee II to enable the Central Committee to take initiatives regarding the programmatic agenda by addressing proposals to the Programme Committee or to specific advisory bodies. The commissions and advisory groups contribute to the shaping of the programme agenda of the council in an advisory capacity. It will be important to clarify the ways in which the “parity committee” will participate in the process of preparing and monitoring this “programme agenda”.

B. The common understanding of “decision-making” refers to the “business” agenda of the governing bodies of the Council. For better understanding it is important to distinguish the different levels of governance and to assign the relevant agenda items to each level:

Assembly: elections of Central Committee and Presidents; revision of Constitution and Rules; reception of the account of the Central Committee and adoption of Programme Guidelines.

Central Committee: election of Executive Committee and Officers, including the General Secretary; appointment of Commissions and Advisory Groups; appointment of senior staff leadership; budget and financial policy; programme policy.

Executive Committee: administrative decisions; staff appointments.

C. Public statements can be issued by all governing bodies, including the Officers and the General Secretary. Public statements by the Assembly or the Central Committee concentrate on issues of at least medium-term policy nature.

D. In reviewing the procedures for setting the agenda it should be the aim to increase the transparency of the process. Normally, the setting of the “business” agenda is being monitored and directed by the Officers and the Executive Committee. The practice of preparing annotated agendas for all meetings where decisions are to be taken has met with positive responses. For meetings of governing bodies it would be desirable that an annotated agenda, together with the supporting documents, be sent to the members 4-6 weeks prior to the meeting.

E. Many smaller agenda items are not presented first in plenary and then referred to the sub-committees or reference committees. They are included in the agenda of the sub-committee from the start; the supporting documents are distributed to the sub-committee and made available for information to the plenary. In order to increase the transparency of the process it is being proposed to send the annotated agendas of the different reference or sub-committees to all members of the Central Committee or to all delegates of the assembly. Since the recommendations for decision will be worked out in the reference or sub-committees, this advance

distribution of agendas will enable members to share urgent concerns with the sub-committee other than the one to which they have been assigned, or to ask for a transfer. In addition, sub-committees should be encouraged to keep minutes of their discussions, available upon request to all members of governing bodies; in this manner the report and recommendations to be submitted to the plenary body for consideration and decisions could concentrate on a limited number of substantive issues.

IV. Categories of Sessions

A. The present rules state: The Assembly shall sit either in general session [see Rule XVI.4], in business session [see Rule XVI.5], or in deliberative session [see Rule XVI.6]. The Business Committee shall determine the category of session appropriate to the matters to be considered. In practice this distinction has not always been followed and the category of session has changed in the course of one and the same session without a clear decision or ruling, thus creating confusion for members.

B. The main distinction is to be drawn between sessions that are reserved for discussion, dialogue and exchange, and those where decisions are to be taken. Dialogue sessions can be provided for general or ceremonial purposes, for public acts of witness, for information, for deliberation, or just for hearing different points of view. Only procedural decisions, like considering a report for further deliberation or referral of an item to a sub-committee, should be allowed during such sessions for which a simple majority vote might be used.

C. The other main category are decision sessions. These sessions would deal with elections and appointments, proposals with reference to the structure, organization, budget or programme of the World Council of Churches and matters of theological or general policy nature. Normally, a decision session of an Assembly or the Central Committee would proceed on the basis of a report, recommendation or proposal that has been fully considered before and is supported by the consensus of the proposing group or sub-committee. The moderators should clearly indicate the

category of session; passing from one category to the other while dealing with the same agenda item may require the approval of the body.

D. During dialogue sessions, especially in plenary, ample time needs to be given by the moderator for all views to be heard. Opportunity should be given frequently for exchanges at table groups or in small groups. In this way participation in the discussion can be increased and complex issues can be unravelled. However, ways need to be found to feed the table conversations back into the dialogue in plenary. The experience of churches that have begun to apply consensus procedures provides different methodologies to achieve this purpose.

V. Governance Procedure

A. Consensus should be the default position for all decisions in meetings of the WCC governing bodies. There is no reason to divide matters which are interwoven and interrelated. Budgetary and other financial decisions affect programmatic and staffing decisions and vice-versa. It does not seem consistent with the move towards a change of culture to use the traditional method of voting in some cases, and consensus in others.

B. The Steering Committee of the Special Commission felt that reception of new member churches should also be handled by consensus. Since this would imply a change in the WCC Constitution (Article II), a clear instruction is needed from Central Committee.

C. It would seem necessary or reasonable to keep the majority or qualified majority voting system in the following specific cases:

- Constitutional changes (which need a qualified majority);
- Elections (following specific rules in each case);
- Adoption of yearly accounts and of the financial audit report (simple majority);
- A certain number of smaller procedural matters (simple majority).

The first three mentioned cases would need to be specified in the Rules.

D. Concerning the smaller procedural matters, they should either be mentioned case by case or the Rules should carry a general formulation, allowing the moderatorial group to exercise discernment. The idea is to expedite procedurally the meeting without losing time. Examples would be the adoption of an uncontested agenda, the election of scrutineers and decisions to change the time-schedule of a day.

E. All preparatory processes for a decision by a WCC governing body, including the preparations for decisions taken by vote as mentioned above, should be conducted following the consensus method. This concerns e.g. all (sub-)committees of the Assembly or the Central/Executive Committees. In case consensus is not reached during the deliberations of such a (sub-)committee (Policy Reference, Finance, Nominations, etc.), the dissenting voice(s) should be mentioned in the report to the governing body.

VI. Order of Speaking

A. The order of speakers in any deliberation can significantly shape the direction of a discussion. The current system in large meetings (e.g. the Central Committee and Assembly) gives authority and power to moderators to choose among those who have submitted written requests to speak. This method allows the moderator to manage the order of speeches between those that support or challenge proposals, those with questions, and those with alternative proposals. This method also allows for the presiding officer to extend invitations to particular participants to speak, an important matter of courtesy in some traditions.

B. Under this system, however, despite the best efforts of those moderating, some who do not get to speak may experience frustration that the debate did not reflect their key concerns, or that speakers were chosen according to some criteria not transparently evident to all.

C. One alternative method for ordering speakers is to have three or more sets of microphones where those wanting to speak could form lines. One microphone could be for those in general agreement with a proposition, one for speakers critical of a proposition, one for those with questions or alternative proposals, etc. The moderator could manage the discussion by alternating between microphones in such a way as to allow for a full exchange of points of view. Similar systems have been tried with some success in some large WCC gatherings.

D. This approach, however, requires participants who want to speak or be recognized to take initiative to join a queue, a practice that might inhibit the participation of shy people or discourage those who prefer the courtesy of being invited by the moderator to speak.

E. A third alternative is to mix these two methods within or between sessions where a topic or proposal is being deliberated. Other alternatives may exist and need to be explored.

F. Whatever method is chosen, the following overarching procedures should be followed:

- a participant may speak only when granted the right to do so by the moderator;
- any participant may raise a point of order at any time;
- all speakers should state their name and the name of their church;
- time limits should be placed on each speaker in order to maximize participation.

G. Persons who wish to participate in the dialogue but do not have the right to participate in the decision-making process, such as representatives of churches in association with the Council, ecumenical delegates or observers, may only speak if recognized by the moderator following submission of a written request to speak. Without the permission of the moderator they may not join a queue during the open microphone portion of a session.

VII. Assistance to the Moderator

A. Obviously, the role of the moderator is decisive for handling consensus procedures. All manuals of churches working with the consensus method insist on the importance of providing proper training for moderators. In the setting of the WCC where different ecclesial and cultural traditions come together an appropriate moderatorial style has to be developed which facilitates consensual deliberation and decision-making. A manual with guidelines specifically for moderators in WCC meetings should be developed.

B. Ways should be found to benefit from the experience of churches like the Uniting Church in Australia. Consultants from such churches could be invited to an Officers' meeting prior to the first use of consensus procedures to alert the Officers to the changes regarding their role that are implied in the consensus method. Such consultants could then also be invited to sit with the Officers during the first Central Committee meeting where consensus procedures are to be used, and during the Assembly in 2006, in order to monitor the flow of the proceedings and to offer advice to the Officers.

C. The other aspect which requires special attention under consensus procedures is the way in which the proceedings are being recorded. In many instances the record of the dialogue will be more important than the wording of the final resolution or recommendation. Guidelines should, therefore, be established for those responsible for taking the minutes. It might be helpful to place the recorder or minute-taker in close proximity to the moderator so that he/she can intervene if there is lack of clarity regarding the precise content or wording of the agreement reached. The recorder or minute-taker should be considered as being part of the "moderatorial group" for the respective meeting.

VIII. Proposal of Co-Moderators

A. The exploration of all possible ways in applying the principle of “parity” led also to the idea of having two moderators in the governing bodies of the WCC and two vice-moderators. While the logic; and, by extension, the legitimacy; of this possibility have gained wide respect, the practical implications are being seriously questioned.

B. Some of the points that need careful consideration in this debate are:

- the “symbolism” of one person leading a governing body (as is the case in practically all ecclesial conciliar bodies);
- the technical difficulties for two persons to “represent” the fellowship simultaneously (especially in emergency situations);
- the uncertainties related to a potential “rotating” system (within a time-limited mandate);
- the high expectations of the moderator in a moment of transition to the consensus method;
- the likelihood that co-moderators would strengthen the power of the General Secretary.

C. Several attempts to find a solution have remained inconclusive, including the latest discussion of the matter by the Steering Committee of the Special Commission (Thessaloniki, June 2003). Therefore, there is a need for the debate to continue. A few questions could serve as discussion starter:

- Is parity at the level of the “moderator(s)” the only way, or could it be considered at the wider level of the “officers”?
- Could parity be envisaged, at least for this transition period and on an experimental basis, for all the reference committees of the Central Committee?
- How could the parity principle be reconciled (harmonized) with the imperative for regional and gender balances?

IX. Further Process

A. The further process has been considered by both the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee of the Special Commission. Both agree that the Central Committee at its meeting in August/September 2003 should provide the basic directions for further work on the basis of this interim report prepared by the small reference-group.

B. Following the Central Committee meeting in 2003, a special consultation, including representatives of churches which practice consensus procedures, should be organized prior to the meeting of the Executive Committee in February 2004. The main purpose of this meeting would be to elaborate on the first draft of the new rules of procedure and to prepare a manual for their introduction.

C. After the Executive Committee meeting in February 2004 the draft rules should be shared with member churches and members of the Central Committee for their information and eventual comment. In the light of comments received the small reference group should revise the draft to enable the Executive Committee at its meeting in the fall of 2004 to finalize the new framework.

D. The Central Committee meeting in February 2005 should use for the first time the new consensus procedures and thus serve as a testing ground for the method. In the light of the experience at this meeting the framework, i.e. the rules and the manual, may have to be revised once more before their final adoption for use at the Ninth Assembly.

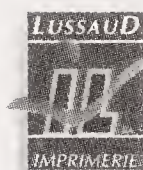
World Council of Churches
(in CHF millions)

	Approved Budget 2003	Budget 2004	Forecast 2003
Unspent Balances Brought Forward	14.04	11.42	14.04
Unspent Balances planned for use in 2003	3.83	2.29	3.62
Income			
Contributions	38.80	37.00	38.62
Other Income	4.60	4.64	4.44
Ecumenical Research Center	-	0.50	0.54
Total Income	43.40	42.14	43.61
Expenditure			
Programmes	40.80	40.19	41.14
International Ecumenical Initiatives	2.60	2.79	2.62
Extraordinary Budget	2.80	-	1.92
Ecumenical Research Center	-	0.50	0.54
Total Expenditure	46.20	43.48	46.23
Net Income / Expenditure	(2.80)	(1.34)	(2.62)
Credit/(Debit) to General Reserves	1.03	0.95	1.00
Unspent Balances Carried Forward	11.24	10.08	11.42

World Council of Churches
Summary of WCC Forecast
Budget 2004

	WCC Total
All Amounts in CHF	
Unspent Balances Brought Forward	11,417,366
Unspent Balances planned for use in 2004	2,287,296
Income	
Undesignated Income/Membership	7,407,575
Contributions Income	30,095,580
Other Income	4,637,729
Total Income	42,140,884
Expenditure	
Programme Costs	25,358,875
Salaries & Benefits Core	16,873,740
Salaries & Benefits Non- Core	1,245,267
Infrastructure Costs	0
Total Costs	43,477,882
Current Income less Expenditure	(1,336,998)
Balance	950,298.04
Unspent Balances Carried Forward	10,080,368

Total	Core Programmes	Infra- structure	International Ecumenical Initiatives	Ecume- nical Research Center
11,279,145	11,404,527	(125,382)	138,221	-
2,149,075	2,149,075	-	138,221	-
7,407,575	7,407,575	-	-	-
26,943,917	26,943,917	-	2,651,775	499,888
4,637,729	1,869,620	2,768,109	-	-
	36,221,112	2,768,109	2,651,775	499,888
23,032,518	20,286,483	2,746,036	2,244,807	81,550
16,825,471	12,690,308	4,135,163	-	48,269
447,016	447,016	-	428,182	370,069
(116,535)	3,996,555	(4,113,090)	116,535	-
40,188,470	37,420,361	2,768,109	2,789,524	499,888
(1,199,249)	(1,199,249)	-	(137,749)	-
949,826	949,826	-	472	-
10,079,896	10,205,278	(125,382)	472	-



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